THE LIFE OF CALIPH 'ALI

By

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Rendered into English

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ERRATA

Page	*Line*	*Read*	*For*
3	30	An explorer	A explorer
5	14	catholicity	catholocity
	25	Journeys	journies
12	31	or	on (and) nor
18	18	sometime	sometimes
19	3	connection	connextion
22	34	Wasaq	dasaqs
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37	30	or	and
39	24	Insert 'you' *before* would	
42	9	Ibn Shayba	Ibn Sayba
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147	24	invading	inveding
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169	3	insert 'in' *before* war	
173	18	he does	you do
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202	30	coins	conins
203	last line	Hew ipde	He wiped
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FOREWORD

History bears witness to the fact, although lamentable, that comprehensive biographies throwing light on the character and achievements of many a mastermind, who has played a leading role in his time or was even harbinger of a new era, were not written for a long time to come. The followers of such esteemed personalities owe a moral responsibility to them in this regard, though the obligation was very often not discharged even by those who have regarded those celebrated persons as their spiritual and religious leaders or unduly extolled and glorified their greatness. Sometimes such a life story comes to be written in good time, but often the debt remains unpaid for several centuries.

This has not been the case with any particular individual nor it relates to any peculiar time. There have been innumerable guides of humanity, flag-bearers of reform and renovation, builders of the nations and countries and teachers of wisdom and learning whose real accomplishments have remained unknown to the world for hundreds of years while a few exaggerated and unbelievable accounts were all that kept alive their cherished memory. These stories also imparted a peculiar colour to these personalities. This was often the result of certain incidents in their lives, political interest or differences of opinion, since all these serve to hide the truth from succeeding generations. It is also not unoften that those who entwine a peculiar creed around such personalities cause them to be seen through the lenses tainted by their own emotions and concepts. The life of such personalities ought to have been presented in their true colours so that everybody had known of their achievements; their lives should have been presented as a paradigm for their followers, if not for others. If they had been followers of Islam, they would

have served as ideal characters, those who had been the elects and favoured by God ; illustrations of the Prophet's guidance and his miracles in flesh and bones; incontrovertible evidences of the truth of Islam and its everlasting faculty to give birth to such illustrious persons to the end of time. Contrarily, we find a narrow barricade being built around them which shuts in their lusture; these barriers were deemed as limit of all that one could know about them, and could never be crossed. Critical and objective research about such personages was deemed as heterodoxy, a rebellion against the creed held by their followers.

One of these victimized personalities, whose real worth was never appreciated, was 'Ali b. Abu Tālib. Peculiar circumstances during his life-time, curious creeds and some psychological impulses have combined to becloud his life and character. Let alone impartial scholars, even those who had based their creed on his greatness never thought it worthwhile to undertake an objective study of his life and achievements. The demands of the age in which he had lived and the difficulties he had to face were never dispassionately analysed. His ideals and values, the principles he held dear throughout his life, and difficulties that confronted him, the way he faced them with complete confidence in his religious and moral precepts, his underlying policy in dealing with the political and administrative affairs, and which were never forsaken by him are some of the essential aspects of his life that need to be explored and studied judiciously. Any attempt that ignores these features of his life and character is bound to be unjust and incomplete besides being liable to lead us to a wrong and misleading conclusion.

The responsibility of such unmerited accounts rests on those historians and biographers who take panegyrics for historiography. Historians of various religious sects and schools very often follow the beaten track of their predecessors disregarding objective analysis through deeper study of the subject. Such writers who rely only on those works which have been earlier compiled on a particular topic are also prone to lack objective enquiry and breadth of vision. This type of penmanship often continues for

hundreds of years although scholarship in its real sense demands that one should never be content with the works written on a particular subject-matter. Historical writings and other works that do not fall within that particular field of enquiry often contain invaluable evidences which may have been ignored by the earlier historians and biographers out of sheer lethargy in order to complete their job with the help of a few well-known sources.

Those who have an experience of writing on any historical theme are aware of the fact that historiography resembles the ruins of a royal palace whose debris is likely to contain all that a historian may be searching for. He may find beneath the wreckage pieces of ceramics, articles of daily use, broken musical instruments, inscriptions and even precious stones and ornaments. He may come across the columns and arches which had once supported the magnificent ceilings and which may tell the story of its past grandeur. Anyone who does not himself comb the scattered material but relies on others for his portrayal of its past glory cannot succeed in depicting its bygone stateliness and sublimity, nor can he claim to have been just to the art of historiography.

There can be no denying the fact that every historian has his own way of expression, inclinations and way of looking at things, his own ideology and political leanings which determine the framework of his undertaking. He may have a vast library at his disposal, but he may limit his enquiry to works on a particular theme or topic, and the later writers may also blindly follow him to present the same account and views. But, as the ancient seers have said those who take the lead leave a lot to be explored by those who come after them. Historiography always needs a explorer, as a poet has correctly said :

> Never think of a task that the cup-bearer has completed,
> The vine has a hundred drinks still untasted.

There were several reasons which induced me to attempt the biography of Caliph 'Āli.

Sometimes between 1955 and 1960 my elder brother Hakīm

Dr. Syed 'Ābdul 'Ali[1] (who had been my guardian since the age of nine when my father[2] died) implored me saying, " 'Ali, you ought to write the biography of 'Āli b. Abu Tālib. God has given you the competence to accomplish this task." That was the time when I had already penned the life stories of several saints and reformers running into more than a thousand pages. I was then young and ambitious and wanted to fathom unchartered seas, but the topic was so imposing and awe-inspiring that I had never felt any task more delicate and difficult than it. I found the subject so baffling and risky that I could not hope to accomplish it successfully unless I had the succour of God to help and guide

1. Maulvi Hakīm Dr. Syed 'Abdul 'Ali, B. Sc., M.B.B.S. was a unique personality, uniting what was the best in the old and new cultures. He was, on the one hand, an orthodox religious scholar and, on the other, a noted physician. He was firm on the accepted creed and had a loving regard for the holy Prophet's household, specially Caliph 'Ali. He remained the Rector of the Nadwatul Ulama for 30 years and it was during his period that the institution carved out a place for itself among religious institutions of the country. His son Mohammad al-Hasani (d. 17 Rajab, 1399/13 May, 1979) was an eminent Arabic writer and journalist who was the founder-editor of *Al-Ba'as al-Islāmi*, the official journal of the Nadwatul 'Ulama. He also wrote several works like *Al-Islām al-Mumtahin* and *Al-Minhāj al-Islām al-Salīm*. Dr. Syed 'Abdul 'Ali breathed his last on 24 Dhi Qa'ada, 1380/7 May, 1961.
2. My father Maulānā Hakīm Syed 'Abdul Hai, ex-Nazim of the Nadwatul 'Ulama was a noted historian who had written several works on the intellectual and cultural history of Indian subcontinent He had also written a dictionary of biography in eight volumes entitled *Nuzhatul Khawātir Behjatus Sawām'e Wan-Nawāzir*. This work published by the Da'iratul Ma'arif Osmania, Hyderabad comprises the biographical sketches of 4,500 eminent personalities of India and is deemed as a reference book on the subject. In addition, he wrote the *Al-Hind fi-'Ahd il-Islām* (India during Muslim Rule) which is a sort of directory of literary works of Indian scholars. It was brought out twice by Al-Majm'a al-Islāmi, Damascus, a prestigious academic organisation of Syrian Government. Apart from these Arabic works, he wrote a history of Urdu poetry under the title of *Gul-i-R'anā*, a cultural history of Gujarat known as *Yād-i-Ayyām* and a few other works. He died on the 16 Jamādi-ul-Ākhir 1341/ 3 February, 1923.

me. It required a deep and extensive study with an open mind and balanced judgement, in short, an effort that could hardly be visualised beforehand unless one had taken a plunge into it. My diffidence did not allow me to undertake the job during the lifetime of my brother.

I have noticed a serious deficiency in the works of Muslim historians and biographers of Caliph 'Ali. It was surprising to see that no complete biography of Caliph 'Ali ibn Abu Tālib throwing light on his chief characteristics and accomplishments had yet been compiled. A work objectively delineating the different facets of his life, fulfilling the norms of modern analytical research and not depending exclusively on his existing biographies was still needed. But it required breadth of vision and catholocity of views since it is not easy to write anything about a genius and mastermind whose personality has already been beclouded by controversial works of exceeding veneration and misjudgements. It was the personality viewed by different schools in the light of its own pre-conceived notions and tenets, thereby truncating his life into a jumble of conflicting abstractions and images as if they were different persons known by the same name. The result was that real personality of Caliph 'Ali and the brilliance of his character had been lost in the mist of time.[1]

The writer of these lines has taken up this arduous task when he is advanced in age, his health is normally indifferent and varied preoccupations coupled with frequent journies within the country and abroad have been causing interruptions in his academic undertakings. However, when he made up his mind placing his reliance on God, the topic so engrossed his mind that he was unable to write or do anything else till the work was completed. He had

1. It needs to be acknowledged that the best work so far written on Caliph Ali is the '*Abqariyat al-Imām* by an Egyptian scholar 'Abbās Mahmūd-al Aqqād, which forms a part of the collection of his articles brought out under the title of *Al-'Abqariyāt al-Islāmiyah*. The article attempts a comparative and psychological study of Caliph 'Ali and is not his comprehensive biography. I have benefited from this work and cited from it wherever necessary.

originally written it in Arabic[1] like his other works on serious topics. First of all historical sources were scanned and relevant extracts collected. The work on the book was started at Indore, the home town of his colleague Maulavi Mo'en Ullah Nadwi (Naib Nazim of Nadwatul 'Ulama) on 11 Rajab 1408/ 1 March, 1988. All the facilities normally required by a writer were kindly made available by Maulavi Mo'en Ullah Nadwi. The writer stayed at Indore with his sincere friends Malik Shāh Nawāz and Maulavi Abul Barakāt Nadwi. The work thus started was continued on return to Lucknow and then at his home in Rae Bareli district although it had to be suspended during Ramadhan and on a few unavoidable excursions. At last, the work was completed at Bombay on 14 Shawwal, 1408/ 31 May, 1988 at the house of my host Hāji Ghulām Muhammad.

The writer has tried to present the life of Caliph 'Ali in the background of the times in which he lived and his relations with the first three Caliphs. The narrative throws light on the sincere cooperation Caliph 'Ali extended to his predecessors as well as the critical or rather highly complex situation obtaining during the period of his caliphate, the precarious state of affairs he had to face, the political and administrative policies he pursued and the moral and Islamic values he always upheld even in the most trying circumstances. This account also presents a glimpse of the neat and immaculate personal life of Caliph 'Ali.

The narration does not come to an end with the life-story of Caliph 'Ali (which, of course, forms the central part of this work) but goes on to recount, albeit briefly, the lives of Hasan and Husain, their accomplishments and sacrifices and the manner in which they served the cause of Islam, in the changed circumstances, with examplary determination, truth and justice.

The story then proceeds to give a brief account of the achievements of some of the saintly persons in the progeny of Caliph 'Ali which goes to show what a lofty moral these persons had

1. The Arabic edition entitled *Al-Murtaza* has since been published by Dārul Qalam, Damascus, and seen several editions.

been blessed with by God and how they continued to hold aloft the banner of reform and regeneration of Islamic teachings in the subsequent degenerate Islamic society. The salient features of their struggle to restore Islamic polity and then, on their failure in that field, the remedial measures taken by them through channelising their energies for religio-moral reform of the Islamic society, spiritual guidance of the people and inculcating a living awareness of God in them demonstrate how they continued to serve the mission of the messengers of God with absolute sincerity and single-mindedness. It was through the efforts of these sons of Caliph 'Ali that Islam reached the farthest corners of the world and has still not lost its appeal. Little attention has so far been paid by the biographers of Caliph 'Ali on the perennial blessings flowing through him and his progeny to this day.

In the concluding pages the writer has reviewed—though reluctantly and solely for not being held responsible by God for any omission—certain beliefs and doctrines propagated by way of misconceived support to and defence of Caliph 'Ali. The writer has endeavoured to show that these precepts have nothing to do either with Caliph 'Ali or the teachings of Islam but are really ingraftings from un-Islamic and extraneous traditions.

In this way this work tries to recapitulate the long history of Islam from a particular angle with special reference to the life of one of the greatest sons of humanity who had the honour of being guided and brought up by the Prophet of Islam.

It would not be out of place to mention here that the writer has placed reliance only on works deemed sound and trustworthy by the scholars and given complete references where anything has been cited from them.

The writer also deems it necessary to express his gratitude to Maulvi 'Atīq Ahmad, a teacher of Nadwatul Ulama, who helped him in the search of the sources. Maulvi Nisār-ul-Haq and Maulvi Muhammad Haroon, both deserve the thanks of the writer, first for taking the dictation and the other for the typing out the manuscript. May God reward them for their dedicated service.

It was also a matter of great pleasure for the writer that Dr.

'Abdullah 'Abbās Nadwi (ex-Professor, Jamiā Umm-ul-Qura, Makkah Mukarramah and now Director of Education in the Nadwatul 'Ulama) offered his services to render this work from Arabic into Urdu. He could have been the fittest person both intellectually and emotionally to undertake this job. He is the most capable person for translating this work into Urdu after the late Muhammad Mian (son of Hakim Dr. Syed 'Abdul 'Ali) who had very successfully rendered my several Arabic works into Urdu).

I must thank God for His mercy that this work, both in Arabic and Urdu, though dealing with certain controversial or rather delicate matters concerning the two major sects of Islam, was so warmly received that two editions of the Arabic version and three of the Urdu were brought out in quick succession. I am grateful to my critics and reviewers who have pointed out certain printing mistakes and shortcomings in the earlier editions. This has made it possible for me to make certain major additions, particularly on the following subjects :

(a) Certain distinguishing characteristics of Caliph 'Ali.

(b) Steps taken by Caliph 'Ali for the first time.

(c) Certain aspects of his caliphate which were not paid due attention by the historians.

(d) Certain clarifications in regard to the character and caliphate of Mua'wiyah.

(e) The example set by Caliph 'Ali for emergent situations which may befall the Muslims at any time.

(f) Additional information about the services rendered to Islam by the progeny of Caliph 'Ali.

Now this English version by the pen of Syed Mohiuddin is ready. May God bless with success all the translators of this work in different languages.

Lastly, I wish to praise Allah who has enabled me to complete this work which may be of benefit to the writer as well as to the readers, for, verily, it is Allah alone who can bless any effort with success and cause it to be received warmly by others.

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

Mohammad is the Apostle of Allah : and those who are with him are stern against the unbelievers, (but) compassionate one to another.

(Q. 49 : 29)

I

'ALI B. ABI TALIB IN MAKKAH FAMILY, BIRTH AND MIGRATION

Family Characteristics

Anatomy, psychology, ethics and sociology are all agreed that every man has certain inherited traits in his blood which have a role in shaping his character, aptitude, competence, inclinations and frame of mind. These traits evince in the following forms.

First, the beliefs and values held strictly, cherished and revered by a family get in-built in the minds of the people belonging to it and anyone disregarding them is considered as a rebel and a renegade not to be tolerated by others.

Secondly, what one hears repeatedly from childhood as, for example, about courage and bravery, magnanimity and generosity, altruism and charity, truthfulness and candidness and honesty get ingrained in one's mind and shape the bent of mind. They determine the inclinations and disposition and give a measure for judgement of these moral values.

Thirdly inherited traits are also generally visible in the stature, appearance, intonation etc., particularly in those families which endeavour to preserve their purity of blood.

Arab poets have also spoken of hereditary traits, Rabīa b.

Maqrūm, belonging to the tribe of Mudir, who had seen both the pre-Islamic and Islamic era, says in one of his couplets included in the *Hamāsa*,

> The noble-born of the tribe is like gold, lying clear,
> In the morning rain, picked up atonce on being seen.

Another poet Hutaiyah, has written,

> They come from the tribe which charges recklessly in the encounter,
> Tearing the veils of darkness, a trait generated by its ancestors.

But these are only broad characteristics which are found to a certain extent: nothing in them is immutable or a rule without any exception. This is not like the way of God which never changes:

> Thou wilt not find in the dispensation of Allah a change, nor wilt thou find in the dispensation of Allah any alteration[1].

Inherited traits have also been described by the Prophet in an eloquent and pithy manner—a mode of expression that is peculiar to the prophets alone. He expresses the kernel of the matter in the most convincing way. Abu Huraira relates from the Prophet.

> People are mines, like those of silver and gold. Those among them who were distinguished in the days of Ignorance will also be outstanding after entering the fold of Islam.[2]

The Prophet also said,

> Anyone kept back by his deeds will not be taken ahead by his lineage[3].

It does not mean that any family or pedigree deserves respect solely by virtue of its blood on lineage nor religious, spiritual or intellectual leadership is the inalienable right bequeathed by parentage. The world had, in pre-Islamic days, seen the worst type of social and moral anarchy because of genealogical chauvinism for often it was cruelly exploited by dictatorships claiming divine right of kingship and priesthood. Roman,

Iranian and Indian civilizations furnish many examples some of which will be dealt with in greater detail in the subsequent pages.

It, therefore, becomes our duty to reflect on the customs and traditions of the family in which 'Ali b. Abi Tālib was born and brought up and assess, with complete impartiality, his family characteristics and peculiarities, moral and psychological factors that influenced its younger generations and what regard his family enjoyed among other Arab tribes. We shall have first to look at the tribe of Quraish and then at Banu Hāshim for it[4].

The Tribe of Quraish

The people of Arabia were unanimous about the nobility of Quraish and none had ever disputed their superiority among the Arabs. Their language and diction were taken as models by other tribes. Hospitality, bravery and courage were their distinguishing qualities. Any one possessing these characteristics was compared with the Quraish as, for example, any one exceptionally eloquent or cordial to his guests was deemed to own the Quraishite traits.

The different clans of Quraish were allied to one another. They cherished these tribal characteristics and strictly followed what they considered to be moral and social code handed down by Abraham. They were singularly different from Bedouins, the dwellers of the desert, who were neither strict in adherence to their religion nor possessed any distinctive culture.

Other distinguishing characteristics of the Quraish consisted of affection for their children (a quality lacked by the Bedouins), circumambulation of the Ka'ba and performing the rites of Haj, enshrouding the dead bodies and taking bath after coitus. Unlike the Brahmins of India and Magis of Iran, they never had any priestly class. They preferred marriage ties among distant kins, solemnised marriage in the presence of witnesses and fixed a dower, pronounced divorce thrice[5] and never married their daughters, daughter's daughter, sister or sister's daughter like the Magis of Iran. They deemed such conjugal relationships as abominable and shameful. The Quran has set its seal on these

conventions of the Quraish by incorporating them in the Islamic *Sharī'ah.*

An honour enjoyed by the Quraish was that its members were entitled to marry in any tribe but they did so only when the spouse whom anyone married was a firm believer in their religion.[6] The Quraish held the view that it was improper and against their traditions to establish conjugal relationship with anyone not subscribing to their faith or lacking the zeal for it.

Banu Hāshim

Banu Hāshim were regarded as the gentry among the Quraish. Historical accounts have little to offer in this connexion, yet whatever little details are available go to show that the members of this clan were known for their moderation and practical approach. Possessing religious ardour and soundness of judgement, they were zealous supporters of the veneration of K'aba as the House of God. They abhorred cruelty and oppression, disliked obstinacy, cherished enterprise and ambition, admired kindness and beneficence to the poor and the weak—in short, in their manner and morals they combined the qualities that are best described by what we call 'chivalry ; With these attributes the Banu Hāshim were pre-eminently suited to become the progenitor of the holy Prophet. Some of their ethical norms were taken over and propagated by Islam. It is, however, a different matter that they had, like other tribes of Arabia, joined their faith to the prevailing paganism of pre-Islamic Arabia[7], which was rejected by Islam.

'Abdul Muttalib b. Hāshim

Following his uncle al-Muttalib, 'Abdul Muttalib took over the duties of *as-Saqāyah*[8] and *ar-Rifāda*[9] of the pilgrims and discharged these obligations to the satisfaction of his people. He attained such eminence as none of his forefathers had enjoyed. He won the love and respect of all.[10]

'Abdul Muttalib was not rich like his grandfather Qusayy nor was the sole authority over the Quraish. A number of rich and

influential persons were there in Makkah, but he was regarded as one of the dignitaries by virtue of his responsibility of watering and feeding the pilgrims. He carried on these duties with sincerity and devotion. He had also the charge of the well of Zamzam, which, because of its age-long association with the K'aba, had enhanced his honour and prestige.

'Abdul Muttalib's veneration of K'aba, and his conviction that it was the House of God who would defend it is demonstrated by the talk he had with Abraha. The incident also exhibits the dignified and august disposition of the Quraishite leader.[11] When Abraha invaded Makkah for the destruction of K'aba, and the Abraha's troops took away two hundred camels of 'Abdul Muttalib, he went to his camp and sought permission to see Abraha. The Abyssinian ruler treated him with the greatest respect, got off his throne and made 'Abdul Muttalib sit beside him on the carpet. He enquired what 'Abdul Muttalib wanted. Thereupon 'Abdul Muttalib replied that he wanted Abraha to return his two hundred camels which had been captured by his men. Abraha looked derisively at 'Abul Muttalib and said, "Do you wish to talk to me about two hundred camels of yours which I have taken, and say nothing about your religion and the religion of your forefathers which I have come to destroy?" 'Abdul Muttalib replied, "I am the owner of the camels and the sanctuary has an owner who will defend it." When Abraha rejoined that He could not defend it against him, 'Abdul Muttalib said, "That is a matter between you and Him"[12].

'Abdul Muttalib used to warn his sons against being oppressive, forbade them to be mean or indecent and commended moral virtues.[13] He died when he was over eighty years of age and his grandson, the Prophet, was of eight years. He would have thus died in 578 A. D[14] Historians are on record that after his death the market in Makkah remained closed for several days[15] as a mark of respect for him.

Abu Tālib

Abu Tālib b. 'Abdul Muttalib was 35 years elder to the

Prophet. His name is reported by some chroniclers as 'Imrān and Shayba, though the reports commonly accepted give it as 'Abdu Munāf. However, he later came to be known by his Kuniyat[16] Abu Tālib. He was one of those chieftains of Quraish who acted as arbiters in the disputes among the people and were consulted by others in important matters.[17]

'Abdul Muttalib had, before his death, entrusted his grandson by Abdullah to the care of Abu Tālib who took over his nephew under his guardianship. Abu Tālib had a loving regard for his nephew and took keen interest in his welfare. The Apostle of God was still young when Abu Tālib took him to Syria with a merchant caravan.[18] Abu Tālib and the Apostle's father 'Abdullāh were brothers by the same mother, Fātima b. 'Amr b. 'Aidh b. 'Imrān b. Makhzūm[19].

Abu Tālib was a man of modest means, but he was attached to his nephew more than his own sons. He made the child sleep with him and took him whenever he went out. He felt so closely attached to his nephew as he had never been to anyone else. Abu Tālib gave him preference over others in foodstuffs.[20]

Ibn Is'hāq relates that it was Abu Tālib who used to look after the Apostle after the death of his grandfather and he became one of his family[21]. Abu Tālib always favoured the Apostle and stood by him.

Abu Tālib once planned to go with a merchant caravan to Syria, and when all preparations had been made for the journey, the Apostle felt grieved for separation from his uncle. Abu Tālib could not bear the sight and said. "By God, neither this child can part company with me nor can I leave him. I will take him in the journey with me.[22]

The Apostle used to say about his aunt, Fātima b. Asad, wife of Abu Tālib: "After the death of my mother who had given birth to me, she was my mother. Whenever Abu Tālib invited others to a repast, he made me share it, but she would keep something apart for me which was taken by me later on[23]. Fātima b. Asad, says Abu 'Amr, was the first Hashamite lady who gave birth to another Hashamite.[24]

Fātima b. 'Asad embraced Islam and also migrated to Medina. When she died, the Prophet shrouded her with his own shirt and, as a mark of gratitude and respect for her, himself lay down in her grave before lowering her in it.[25]

When the Apostle of God started preaching Islam, speaking disparagingly of the idols and idolatry and declaring paganism as unfounded and false, the people of Makkah took great offence and resloved unanimously to oppose him as their enemy. Abu Tālib, however, continued to protect and support the Prophet.

The animosity between the Prophet and the people of Makkah deepened and at last some of their leading men went to Abu Tālib and said, "You have a high and lofty position amongst us. We had asked you to prohibit your nephew from his preachings but you have not done so. By God, we cannot endure that our forefathers should be reviled, our discernment mocked and our gods insulted. Now, you either put a stop to his activities or we shall fight both of you until one of us perishes."

Abu Tālib told the Prophet what the people had said to him and implored the Prophet to spare him and his own self The reply given by the Prophet was: "O my uncle, if they put sun in my right hand and the moon in my left on the condition that I abandon this course, I would not forsake it until God has made it victorious or I perish therein." Thereupon Abu Tālib said to the Prophet, "My nephew, continue your mission and say what you please, for by God I will never give you up on any account."[26]

When Islam began to spread among the tribes, the Quraish came together and decided among themselves to write a document in which they decided to put a boycott on Banu Hāshim and Banu Muttalib, that they would not marry their women, and that they would neither buy nor sell to them. The document was then hung inside the K'aba and everybody abided by it. The two clans of Banu Hāshim and Banu Tālib stood by 'Abu Tālib and entered with him into the 'Sh'eb' or the alley.[27]

It was the seventh year of the Prophet's mission when the boycott was decided upon. For three years Banu Hāshim

remained confined in the alley, nothing reaching them except what their sympathisers gave them secretly. They endured great privations until worms ate up the document and the covenant was automatically annuled.[28]

In mid-Shawwāl of the tenth year of Prophet's mission Abu Tālib breathed his last. He was then over eighty-six years of age.[29] It was the year when the Prophet's wife Khadīja also expired. Abu Tālib had not embraced Islam.[30] The Prophet had to face, during the year, many troubles that followed fast on each other's heals.[31] The Prophet called it the year of sorrows

Sons of Abu Tālib

Abu Tālib had four sons: Tālib (on account of whom he came to be known as Abu Tālib i. e, father of Tālib), 'Aqeel, J'afar and 'Ali. He had also two daughters, Umm Hāni and Jumāna. All the six were born to Fātima b. Asad; ten years intervening between the birth of each. Thus 'Ali was ten years younger to J'afar.[32]

Tālib died as a polytheist sometimes after the battle of Badr. It has also been related that he had gone out on a journey but never returned, leaving no trace of him. He had gone along with some others who had lost their way in the journey. He had a great affection for the Prophet and had also composed some verses praising him. At the time the battle of Badr was fought, he accompanied the Quraish though disinclined. When the Quraishites had set out for fighting the Muslims they had taunted Tālib, saying: 'O Hāshamites, we know that you have accompanied us reluctantly for your sympathies are with Muhammad.' At Badr Tālib did not fight the Muslims and returned to Makkah. He composed a few verses and an ode eulogising the Apostle and a poem lamenting those who had been killed at Badr.[33]

'Aqeel was the second son of Abu Tālib who was known as Abu Yazīd. He embraced Islam at the time of the conquest of Makkah, while others claim that he entered the fold of Islam after the treaty of Hudaybia and migrated to Medina in 8 A. H. He had been one of the captives of Badr for whom ransom was

paid by 'Abbās His name finds a mention in serveral *ahādith*. He participated in the battle of Mūta but nothing is reported about him in connextion with the conquest of Makkah and expedition to Hunayn, perhaps because he was not keeping well on those occasions, as stated by Abu S'ad. But Zubayr b. Bakkār has related on the authority of Husain b. 'Ali that he was one of those companions who remained unshaken in the battle of Hunayn.

Abu Tālib was more attached to 'Aqeel than his other sons and daughters. When, during a grievous famine, the Prophet and 'Abbās had approached Abu Tālib with the suggestion that they were prepared to relieve his burden by taking over the responsibility of maintaining his sons, he had replied: 'Do what you like so long as you leave me 'Aqeel.' The Apostle of God took the charge of 'Ali and 'Abbās of J'afar.[34]

'Aqeel b. Abi Tālib was an expert in the genealogy and character of the Quraishites. People used to call upon him in the Masjid-un-Nabi, Medina, to enquire about the pedigree of different persons. He was very witty and could easily reduce anybody to silence. Hishām al-Kalabi relates from 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās that Quraish used to refer their cases for arbitration or settlement to one of the four persons: 'Aqeel, Makhrama, Huwaytib and Abu Jahm. Ibn S'ad says that 'Aqeel b. Abu Tālib died during the reign of Caliph Mu'āwiyah while the *Tārikh al-Bukhāri al-Asghar* contains a report with complete chain of narrators which affirms that he died during the reign of Yazīd before the incident of Harrah.[35] He was ninety-six at the time of his death,[36] and had lost his eye-sight. He had a large family. Out of his twelve sons, nine had accompanied Husain b. 'Ali and all of them had laid down their lives with him. Muslim b. 'Aqeel was the bravest of all who had been sent to Kūfa by Husain where he had been mercilessly slain by Ziyād.[37]

J'afar b. Abi Tālib was one of the earliest converts to Islam.[38] When brotherhood was instituted between the Emigrants and the Helpers, write historians, the Prophet made J'afar a brother of Mu'ādh b. Jabal. Abu Huraira says that J'afar b.

Abi Tālib was the most meritorious after the Prophet. Bukhāri describes him as the most magnanimous to the poor. Khālid al-Hazza relates from Ikramah that Abu Huraira heard the Prophet saying that of all those men who walked on the earth and rode on horses, J'afar b. Abi Tālib was the most excellent.[39] This report by Abu Hurraira also finds place, with complete and unimpeachable chain of narrators, in the Tirmidhi and Nasā'i. Baghwi has reported on the authority of Muqbiri that Abu Huraira said: J'afar had an affectionate regard for the poor, used to sit and mix up with them and serve them selflessly. The Prophet of God used to call him as *Abul Masākīn* or the father of the poor. The Prophet also said to J'afar once, "You resemble me both in features and character."[40]

J'afar had migrated to Abyssinia where Nagus and his men accepted Islam on his hand. He returned shortly after the conquest of Khaybar; the Prophet gave him a warm welcome, kissed his forehead, and said, "I can't say whether I am pleased more by J'afar's return or the conquest of Khaybar."

'Abdullāh b. J'afar says that whenever he asked anything from 'Ali and the latter refused it, he sought it again in the name of J'afar and 'Ali instantly granted his request. J'afar b. Abi Tālib died fighting in the battlefield of Mūta in Jamada'l Ula, 8 A. H, during the life-time of the Prophet. He charged the enemy riding his horse. When the battle hemmed in he jumped off his charger and hamstrung her and fought till he was killed. Ibn 'Amr says that he was one of those who had fought in the battle of Mūta. When his comrades searched for the corpses of the martyrs, the dead body of J'afar was found with more than ninety cuts on the front made by arrows and lances. The Prophet said that he had seen J'afar flying with the angels in paradise. Tabrāni has recorded this report on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās. Another version of the report says: 'The Prophet saw J'afar as an angel whose both the arms were blood-stained since these had been severed in the battle."

When the troops returned from Mūta to Medina the Prophet and other Muslims received them outside the city. A number of

children had also come out. The Prophet, who was riding his camel, told the people to take the children up and asked to give him the son of J'afar. 'Abdullāh b. J'afar was brought to him and he seated him in his lap.[41] 'Āisha relates that when the news of J'afar's death was received by the Prophet sorrow was seen on his face.[42] The Prophet said to the members of J'afar's family; "Bring the children of my brother." They were brought to him and he felt as if they were chickens. He sent for barber and got their hair cut. The Prophet said to their mother, "You must be anxious about their maintenance and upkeep. I am their guardian both in this world and the next."[43]

Others have reported that the Prophet asked J'afar's wife to bring her children. When they were brought the Prophet smelt them and his eyes were filled with tears. It has also been related that when the news of J'afar's death came, the Prophet said to his family members, "Provide food to J'afar's family,[44] for they have received the news which would not allow them to do anything." His face then betrayed marks of sorrow.[45]

'Abdullāh son of J'afar was the first child born to a Muslim couple, when his parents were in Abyssinia. He was known for his benevolence and generosity. Two other sons of J'afar were Muhammad and 'Aun.[46]

Nagus had asked the Muslim migrants what was the religion for which they had forsaken their people without entering into his religion or any other. J'afar b. Abu Tālib then rose to give a reply and he depicted an exact picture of Arabian society during the days of ignorance.[47] Then he described the revolutionary change Islam had brought in the lives of converts to Islam. He refrained from raising any issue likely to provoke any controversy or his adversaries to rebut his arguments. He also kept in view the fact that he and his comrades were refugees in a country, the ruler of which was a zealous Christian. His reply was most appropriate for the occasion and showed his insight into human psychology. His speech also furnished an example of his sparkling wit, elocution, wisdom and forcefulness for which the Quraish among the Arabs and Banu Hāshim in the Quraish were rightly

celebrated.

Umm Hāni

She was daughter of Abu Tālib and cousin sister of the Prophet whose name has been reported by some as Fakhta, Fātima or Hind, although the name first mentioned is more familiar. She was married to Hubayra b. 'Aidh al-Makhzūmi. Once the Prophet said alluding to her : 'Of all those women who ride camels, the women of Quraish are better and they are more kindly to their children.'

Abu 'Umar has related that Hubayra fled to Najrān after the conquest of Makkah where he composed verses giving reasons for leaving Makkah. He indited a few more verses on receiving the news of Umm Hāni's acceptance of Islam. His son from Umm Hani was 'Amr after whom he was called Abu 'Amr.

On the day Makkah was conquered Umm Hāni had given protection to two persons of Bani Makhzūm whom 'Ali had sworn to kill wherever he found them. When the Prophet came he greeted her and she told him about the people she had given sanctuary. He replied : 'We give protection to whomsoever you give protection and we give safety to those you protect. We shall not kill them.' Umm Hāni says that the Prophet took bath in her house and offered eight *rak'ats* of prayer.[48] Several *ahādith* related by Umm Hāni are included in the *Sihāh Sittah* and other works of *hadīth*. Tirmidhi has reported that she was alive when 'Ali died.[49]

Jumānah

A daughter of Abu Tālib who was, reports Abu Ahmad al-'Askari, wife of Abu Sufyān b. al-Hārith b. 'Abdul Muttalib and mother of 'Abdullāh. Dar Qutni gives no more details in the *Kitāb al-Ukhwah* about her except that she married Abu Sufyān b. Al-Hārith and that 'Abdullāh was born to her. Zubayr b. Bakkār says that Jumānah was the sister of Umm Hāni. Ibn Is'hāq says that Jumānah was one of those who received thirty *dasaqs*[50] from the booty of Khaybar. Al-Fākihi's *Kitāb-i-Makkah*

reports from 'Abdullāh b. 'Uthmān b. Jasham that he had told 'Atā Mujāhid, Ibn Khatīr and several other persons that they used to put on *Ihrām* in the tent of Jumānah at Tany'im on the 27th of Ramadhan. She was a daughter of Abu Tālib and mother of J'afar b. Abu Sufyān b. Al-Hārith, who had been given thirty *dasaqs* from the booty of Khaybar by the Prophet.[51]

Birth of 'Ali

There are several authentic reports which establish that 'Ali b. Abi Tālib was born ten years before the Prophet received his first revelation. Ibn Sa'd says that 'Ali was born after twelve nights of the month of Rajab had elapsed in the 30th year of Elephant.[52] Hākim writes that there are consecutive reports to show that 'Ali was born to Fātima b. Usaid within the enclosure of K'aba. Another man born in K'aba, he adds, was Hakīm b. Hizām.[53]

Ibn Abi al-Hadīd writes in the *Sharh Nahjul Bulāg'iah*, "There is a difference of opinion about the place where 'Ali was born. Most of the Shi'ites believe that 'Ali was born within the precincts of K'aba but the scholars of *Hadīth* do not accept this view. They are of the opinion that only Hakīm b. Hizām b. Khuwaylid b. Asad b. 'Abdul 'Izza b. Qusayy was born in K'aba.[54]

Under Prophet's Guardianship

Tabri has related from Mujāhid that an extraordinary blessing God had destined for 'Ali was brought about by the grevious famine overtaking Quraish. Abu Tālib had a large family. The Prophet said to his uncle 'Abbās, who was a prosperous man among the Quraish: 'Uncle, your brother has a large family and you know the difficulties being faced by him. Let us relieve his burden and take over the responsiblity of supporting some of his children.' 'Abbās agreed to his suggestion and both approached Abu Tālib. They said, 'We have come to you because these are the days of distress through which all of us are passing. Let us take the responsibility of some of your children and relieve your burden until conditions improve.' Abu Tālib replied, 'Do what

you like so long as you leave me 'Aqeel.' Thus, the Prophet took 'Ali and kept him with him and 'Abbās took J'afar. 'Ali continued to live with the Prophet until God raised him to apostleship. 'Ali relied on the Prophet and affirmed his truth, while J'afar remained with 'Abbās until he did not need the latter's support.[53]

'Ali Accepts Islam

One day 'Ali came in while the Prophet and Khadīja were offering prayers. 'Ali asked, 'What is it?' The Prophet replied, 'This is the religion of God which he has chosen for Himself and sent Apostles with it. I call you to God, the One, without any associate.' 'Ali said, 'It is something I never heard before. I cannot decide until I have talked with Abu Tālib about it.' As the Prophet did not want the secret to be divulged before he preached Islam publicly, he said to 'Ali, 'If you do not accept Islam, then keep it a secret.' 'Ali kept quiet for the night and Allah implanted Islam in his heart. Early next morning he went to the Prophet and asked, 'What had you told me yesterday?' The Prophet said, 'Bear witness that there is no God but Allah alone, without associate, and disavow al-Lāt and al-'Uzza, and renounce all partners to God, 'Ali repeated what the Prophet had said and became a Muslim. He used to come to the Prophet during the absence of Abu Tālib and concealed his faith as directed by the Prophet.[56]

These reports establish that 'Ali was the next Muslim after Khadīja to believe in Islam and the first male to offer prayers behind the Prophet. Zayd b. Arqam says that 'Ali was the first to believe in the divine message while 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās relates that the first man who accepted Islam after Khadīja, was 'Ali. Muhammad b. 'Abdur Rahmān Zarārah says that 'Ali accepted Islam at the age of nine years but Mujāhid asserts that the first man who offered prayers with the Prophet was 'Ali, and he was of ten years at that time. Hasan b. Zayd maintains that 'Ali never worshipped the idols since he was a minor (when he accepted Islam.)[57] It can be assumed from the foregoing reports as well as the circumstances that since 'Ali passed his adolescence

under the care of the Prophet and received the guidance and training of one who was destined to become the teacher of humanity, whose message was to encompass the whole world, it is unlikely that 'Ali would have taken any path other than that which was righteous. Some scholars have attempted to integrate these reports by putting forth the view that Khadīja was the first among women, Abu Bakr among the aged and mature males and 'Ali among the youngsters to accept Islam.[58] However, the speech delivered by 'Ali after the death of Abu Bakr, cited elsewhere, shows that the latter was first to embrace Islam.

'Ali and Abu Tālib

Ibn Is'hāq relates that at the time of prayers the Prophet used to go to the glens of Makkah accompanied by 'Ali, who went unknown to his father, uncles and other family members There they used to pray and return at nightfall. This went on so long as God intended. One day Abu Tālib saw them while they were praying and asked the Prophet, 'O nephew, what is this religion I see you practising ?' He replied, 'O uncle, this is the religion of God, His angels, His apostles and the religion of our father Abraham.' According to another version the Prophet replied : 'God has sent me as a Prophet to mankind, and you, my uncle, most deserve that I should call you to it.' Abu Tālib replied, 'I cannot give up the religion of my forefathers and their rites and customs, but by God you shall never be put to any harm so long as I live.' Biographers of the Prophet also relate that Abu Tālib asked 'Ali, 'O son, what is this religion of yours ?' He answered,' 'I believe in God and His Apostle and pray with the Prophet of God and follow him.' It is claimed that Abu Tālib said to 'Ali, 'He must be calling you to what is good, so stick to him.'[59]

Assistance to Seekers after Truth

'Ali b. Abi Tālib used to guide and help those who came to Makkah in search of truth and to know more about Islam. He had been endowed with intelligence and skill expected of Banu

Hāshim for performing delicate jobs. The incident relating to Abu Dharr Ghifāri's acceptance of Islam has been narrated by Bukhāri from 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās. He writes: "When Abu Dharr came to know of the Prophet's mission he sent for his brother and said, 'Go to the valley and find out about the man who calls himself the Apostle of God and believes that he receives divine communications from the Heaven. Listen to him and tell me about him.' Abu Dharr's brother went to the Prophet, listened to him and went back. He said to Abu Dharr, 'I have seen him. He teaches righteous behaviour and recites something which is not poetry.' Abu Dharr replied, 'You have not been able to tell me what I wanted to know'. 'Abu Dharr then made preparations for the journey and taking a small water-skin set out for Makkah. He came to the sanctuary and tried to find out who the Prophet was as he did not know him, until it became dark. He lay down to sleep. 'Ali saw him and presumed that he was a wayfarer. He followed him, but none addressed the other until it was morning. Abu Dharr came to the sanctuary with his belongings and spent the whole day there but could not meet the Prophet. It was nightfall again and Abu Dharr lay down. 'Ali went near him and said, 'Has the man not yet found his destination to stay there?' 'Ali then asked Abu Dharr to follow him but none of them spoke to the other. The third day passed away in the same way. 'Ali, however, tarried there and at last said to Abu Dharr, 'Will you tell me why have you come here?' Abu Dharr replied, 'I will tell you if you take the pledge to guide me.' 'Ali gave the assurance and asked what he wanted. Abu Dharr told him of his quest to which 'Ali replied,' 'Surely, he calls to the truth. Undoubtedly he is the Prophet of God. When you rise up in the morning come behind me. If I perceive any danger, I will halt for a while as if to urinate. But if I continue walking, follow me wherever I go.' Abu Dharr did as directed by 'Ali and came to the Prophet following him. He listened to the Prophet and accepted Islam at once at the same place."[60]

The Greatest Honour

'Ali relates : "One day I and the Prophet came out of the house and came to the door of K'aba. The Prophet asked me to sit down and clambering my shoulders asked me to stand up. Then, realising my feebleness, he asked me to sit down. He dismounted and himself sat down asking me to climb over his shoulders. I did as he directed and then he stood up until I found myself raised so high as if I would touch the sky. Thus, I reacched the ceiling of the K'aba. I started twisting the idol of copper or bronze right and left and up and down, until I was able to dislodge it. The Prophet asked me to throw it down and when I did so, it broke into pieces as if it was made of glass. Then I dismounted and we came out quickly and hastened to our houses lest somebody might see us."

Hākim has specified in the *Mustadrak* that the incident relates to the period before migration.[61]

Migration

The Prophet continued to call the Quraish and other Arab tribals to Islam and the animosity and bitterness of Quraish went on increasing. Events followed in quick succession : boycott of Banu Hāshim was enforced; they took shelter in the glen of Abu Tālib; J'afar b. Abi Tālib and a number of other Muslims had to migrate to Abyssinia; the Prophet went to Tā'if where he was mocked and ill-treated; the Prophet's ascension to the heavens occurred in the meantime; Hamza b. 'Abdul Muttalib and 'Umar b. Al-Khattāb accepted Islam; a number of people belonging to Makkah and those coming from outside joined their faith to Islam ; the Prophet's protector, his uncle Abu Tālib, and his wife Khadīja died and the persecution of Muslims became more severe. Then Islam started making headway in the two major tribes of Qahtān, Aws and Khazraj, which was followed by the two pledges of 'Aqba. Islam spread quickly in Medina and Muslims started migrating to that city until only the Prophet, 'Ali, Abu Bakr and a few other Muslims who had been forcibly detained remained in Makkah. The Quraish feared that the Prophet might also

leave and go out of their reach. These incidents require a detailed description but need not be recounted in the biography of 'Ali, for they form part of the Prophet's biography.[62]

Such were the conditions when the Quraish assembled in the *Dār al-Nadwa* their council chamber, and agreed on the suggestion that each clan should provide a youngman, powerful and courageous, who should all strike a blow at the Prophet jointly and kill him. Thus the responsibility for his blood would be upon all the clans and 'Abdu Manāf, not being able to fight them all, would have to accept the blood-money. Having come to a decision the people dispersed.

Allah informed the Prophet about this decision. The Prophet told 'Ali to lie on his bed, saying that no harm would befall him. It was certainly not an easy task, for anyone in place of 'Ali would not have been able to take a nap on that bed. It was only possible for a man having an unflinching faith in God and so smitten by the love of the Prophet that he was willing to lay down his life for him. And, all this was true of 'Ali for he must have thought that when the enemy would come to know that the Prophet had escaped they would all fall upon him.

But 'Ali, absolutely unconcerned of his safety, lay down to have a sound sleep on the Prophet's bed.

The enemy assembled at the door of the Prophet determined to strike at him all at once as and when he came out. The Prophet came out to them with a handful of dust. God took away their sight so that they could not see him and he began to sprinkle dust on their heads as he recited the first nine verses of *Surah Yāsin* ending with the words : *And We covered them and they could not see.*[63]

When the Prophet had left, someone came up and asked the disbelievers what they were waiting for there. When they said that they were waiting for Muhammad, he said, 'But, good heavens, Muhammad is gone !' Then they peeped inside and saw 'Ali lying on the Prophet's bed. They were assured that the Prophet was still there. They remained there until the morning when 'Ali rose from the bed and they had to return

frustrated in their task.[64]

Ibn S'ād relates from 'Ali: 'When the Prophet went to Medina with the intention of migrating to that city, he commanded me to stay behind in Makkah in order to return the goods which men had deposited with him to their owners.' (People used to deposit their goods with the Prophet for they knew him to be *Amīn* or the trustworthy.) 'Ali further says, 'I stayed for three days after the departure of the Prophet. I mixed with them and did not withdraw even for a day. Then, after three days I went to the locality of 'Amr b. 'Awf. The Prophet was present there. I went to the house of Kulthūm b. Al-Hidam where the Prophet was staying.'[65]

'Ali travelled by night and kept himself concealed during the day-time throughout the journey. When he reached Medina he had blisters in his feet.

The Prophet sent for 'Ali. When he was informed that 'Ali was unable to walk the Prophet himself went to 'Ali. He embraced 'Ali, saw the sores in his feet and shed tears. The Prophet applied his saliva on the wounds and passed his hands on 'Ali's legs. 'Ali never had any trouble in his legs to the time of his death.[66]

'Ali arrived in Medina in mid-Rabi al-Awwal; the Prophet had not left Quba by that time.[67]

A report in the *Sunan* of Tirmidhi shows that at Medīna the Prophet took 'Ali as his brother. Apart from Tirmidhi, who holds the report as authentic, Shāh Waliullah has given preference to it both in the *Izālatul Khifa* and *Tanwīr al-'Aynayn* over other reports.

Notes and References :

1. Q. 35 : 43
2. Ahmad b. Hanbal, *Musnad al-Imām Ahmad b. Hanbal*, Egypt, 1949, Vol. II, p. 535.
3. Al-Muslim, Al-Hajjāj al-Qushairi, *Sahīh al-Muslim, Bab-uz Zikr wad Du'ā wat-Tauba*, Cairo, 1955.
4. The author has discussed in detail the characteristics of the Quraish and Banu Hāshim in *Muhammad Rasūlullāh*. Lucknow, 1982, pp. 34-35.
5. Mahmūd Shukri al-Alūsi al-Baghdādi, *Balūgh al Arab fi m'arafa al-Ahwāl al-'Arab*, Cairo, n.d., III Ed., Vol. I, p. 243.

6. *Ibid.*
7. *Muhammad Rasūlullāh, op. cit.*, p. 67.
8. Provision of water for the pilgrims during the Haj.
9. Making arrangements for boarding and lodging of indigent pilgrims.
10. Guillaume, A., *The Life of Muhammad*, London, 1955, (being English rendering of *Sirat Ibn Is'haq*), p. 61; Ibn Hishām, 'Abd al-Malik, *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyah*, Cairo, 195:, Vol. I, p. 142
11. Dr. Jawwād 'Ali, *Al-Mufassal fi Tārikh al-'Arab Qabl al-Islām*, Beirut, 1968-73, Vol. IV, p. 78
12. *Muhammad Rasūlullāh, op. cit.*, pp. 72-73; *The Life of Muhammad, op. cit*., p. 25. Later events proved that 'Abdul Muttalib was right. The Master of the sanctuary defended His House. Abraha returned disappointed; his army was pelted with stones by swarms of flying creatures which made them like green crop devoured by cattle (Q. 105: 1-5).
13. *Balūgh al-Arab, op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 324.
14. *Al-Mufassal fi Tārikh al-'Arab, op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 324.
15. Balādhuri, Ahmad b. Yahya b. Jābir, *Al-Ansāb*, Cairo 1959, Vol. I, p. 87.
16. A type of descriptive (patronymic) surname used in an honorific manner. The Arabs used to call anyone as the father of his first-born son.
17. *Bulūgh al-Arab, op. cit*, Vol. I, p. 324.
18. The incident has been narrated by all the biographers of the Prophet. See *Muhummad Rasūlullāh, op. cit.*. p. 95.
19. *The Life of Muhammad, op. cit.*, p. 79; *Al-Sirah Ibn Hishām, op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 179.
20. Khālid Ansāri, *Hayāt-i-Abī-Tālib*, Bhopal 1951.
21. *The Life of Muhammad, op. cit.*, p. 79; *Al-Sirh Ibn Hishām, op. cit*, Vol. I, 179.
22. *Ibid.*
23 Al-Hākim, Abū Abdullah Muhammad b. 'Abdullah, *Al-Mustadrak 'ala-Sahihain*, Hyderabad, 1340 A.H. p. 151.
24. Ibn 'Abdul Barr, Hāfiz Abū 'Umar Yūsuf b. 'Abdullāh, *Al-Isti'āb fi M'arafah al-As'hāb*, Beirut, n.d Vol. II, p. 26.
25. Dhahabi, Shams-ud-din Mohammad bin Ahmad, *Siyar al-Āl'ām al-Nabalā'*, Beirut, 1981, Vol. II, p. 87.
26. *The Life of M uhammad, op. cit.*, p. 119; *Al-Sirah Ibn Hishām, op. cit.*, Vol. I. pp. 265-66.
27. *Ibid*, p. 159.
28. *Ibid*, pp. 172-173.
29. *Bulūgh-al-Arab. op. cit.*, Vol. I, 324.
30. The collections of *hadīth* and older biographical works do not

support the view that Abu Tālib had accepted Islam, and this had actually made the Prophet heavy-hearted. This also goes to show that in so far as faith and creed are concerned, no consideration can be given to family or personal relationship. What counts in such matters is acceptence of the message brought by the Prophet, for simply love of and assistance rendered to the Apostle of God would be of no avail if it is not backed by faith in him and his message.

31. *The Life of Muhammad, op. cit.*, p. 191 ; *Al-Sirah Ibn Hishām, op. cit*, pp 415-16.
32. Ibn Khathīr, Imād-ud-din Ismā'il b. 'Umar. *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah*, Beirut, 1966, Vol. III, p. 233.
33. Al-Tilmisāni, Muhammad b. Bakr b. 'Abdullāh b. Mūsa al-Ansāri (d. 681 A. H.). *Al-Jawāharah fi Nasb al-Nabi (SAW) wa Ashāb al-'Asharata*, Riyadh, 1983, Vol. II, pp. 192-193.
34. *Ibid.* pp. 192-193.
35. Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalāni, Shihāb-ud-din al-Fadl b. 'Ali, *Al-Isābah fi Tamīz is-Sahābah*, Cairo, 1938, Vol. II, p. 494.
36. Ibn Abi al-Hadid, 'Iz-ud-din, *Sharh Nahjul Balāghah*, Beirut, 1979, Vol. XI, p. 250.
37. *Al-Jawāharah, op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 40-41.
38. Ibn Sa'd writes in the *Al-Tabaqāt al-Kubra* (Beirut, 1957-58, Vol. IV, p. 34) that J'afar embraced Islam before the Prophet started preaching Islam publicly and remained with him in the Dār al-Arqam.
39. An Arabic idiom signifying that J'afar b. Abi Tālib was the most worthy person.
40. Bukhāri and Muslim on the authority of Barā' b. 'Āzib.
41. Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad Ahmad*, Cairo, 1949.
42. *Al-Isābah, op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 237-238.
43. *Al-Tabaqāt al-Kubra, op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 37.
44. It has become customary among Muslims after this incident, to supply food to one's kins in the case of a bereavement.
45. Al-Tirmidhi, Muhammad b. 'Isā, *Al-Jām'e al-Sahih*, Hims, 1969-71.
46 *Al-Jawaharah, op. cit.* Vol. II, pp. 41-42.
47. The elequent speech of J'afar has been preserved by Ibn Hishām. Also see *The Life of Muhammad*, pp. 151-52.
48. *Sahih Bukhāri*.
49. *Al-Isābah, op. cit.* Vol. VIII, pp. 317-18.
50. A *dasaq* consists of sixty Sa', one Sa' weighing about 3. 265 kg.
51. *Al-Isābah, op. cit* , Vol. IV, pp. 259-60.
52. *Al-Tabaqāt al-Kubrā, op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 11 ; Al-Masūdi, Abul Hasan Āli b. Husain, *Murawwajuz-Zahab wa Ma'āwin al-Jawāhar*, Cairo, 1303 A.H., Vol. II, p. 358.
53. Al-Mas'ūdi, Abul Hasan Āli b. Husain, *Murawwajuz-Zahab, op. cit.*,

Vol. II, p. 2 : Burhān-ud-dīn al-Halabi, *Insān al-Āyun fi Sīrat al-Amīn al-Mamūn*, also known as *Sīrat-al-Halabiyah*, Egypt, 1964, Vol. III, p. 498. (Shāh Waliullah has preferred this report in the *Izālat al-Khifa*, Lahore, 1976.)

54. *Sharh Nahjul Balāghah*, *op. cit*, Vol. I. p. 14.
55. Tabri, Abu J'afar Muhammad b. Jarir, *Tārīkh al-Umam wal Mulūk*, Cairo, 1960-61, Vol. II, p. 313.
56. *Al-Bidāyah wan Nihāyah*, *op. cit*, Vol. III, p. 24.
57. *Al-Tabaqāt al-Kubra*, op. cit. Vol. III, p, 21 ; Ibn Athīr al-Jazari, Iz-ud-din Abul Hasan 'Ali b. Muhammad, *Usad al-Ghāba*, Beirut, n d., Vol. VII, pp. 41—43.
58. It is related that after the verse, "Warn thy family, thy nearest relations" was revealed the Prophet invited the descendants of 'Abdul Muttalib to a repast and called them to Islam. Only 'Ali, it is said, responded to his call while Abu Lahab ridiculed the Prophet. This incident has been described in all its details in the *Al-Bidāyah wan Nihāyah* (Vol. III) by Ibn Khatīr and also by other biographers of the Prophet but it has been omitted here because the scholars of *hadith* doubt its veracity.
59. *The Life of Muhammad*, *op. cit.*, p. 114 ; *Al-Sirah Ibn Hishām*, *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 264.
60 Bukhāri, Abi 'Abdullah Muhammad b. Ismā'il, *Al-Jāmi al-Sahīh*, Egypt, 1953.
61. Ahmad b. Hanbal has given this *hadith* in his *Musnad* (ed. Ahmad Muhammad Shakir, Cairo, 1949, Vol. II, pp. 644-45) which also finds a place in the *Tārīkh* of Bukhāri, and also Ibn Mājah and Hākim.

    However, a few later historians have wrongly attributed this incident to the conquest of Makkah when the Prophet threw away all the idols from the K'aba. But the fact is that the incident occurred before migration. Burhān-ud-dīn al-Halabi (975—1044) writes in the *As-Sirat al-Halabiyah* (Vol. III, p. 30) that 'Ali's statement that they came out quickly and hastened to their houses lest somebody might see them clearly indicates that the incident pertains to the pre-migration era.
62. For details see the author's *Muhammad Rasūlullāh*, Lucknow, 1982, pp. 105-106
63. Q. 36 : 9
64. *The Life of Muhammad*, *op. cit.*, p. 222 ; *Al-Sirah Ibn Hishām*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 480-83.
65. 'Ali Muttaqi, Shaikh, *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, Hyderabad, 1312 A.H , Vol. VIII, p. 335.
66. Ibn Athīr al-Jazari, *Al-Kāmil fit-Tārikh*, Beirut, 1399 A.H., Vol. II, p. 75.
67. Ibn Sa'd, *Al-Tabaqāt al-Kubra*, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 22.

II

'ALI AT MEDINA

Institution of Brotherhood

Ibn S'ad writes in the *al-Tabaqāt al-Kubrā* : 'The Prophet of God (peace and blessings be upon him) instituted brotherhood between 'Ali b. Abi Tālib and Sahl b. Hunayf.'[1] Ibn Kathīr records a *hadīth* to the same effect but Ibn Is'hāq and several other biographers and annalists have stated that the Apostle himself established brotherhood with 'Ali. A number of *ahādīth* have been cited in its support but either the chain of narrators of these reports is defective or the reports are incoherent.[2]

Marriage with Fātima

The Prophet married Fātima to 'Ali in the second year of *hijrah*. On this occasion the Prophet said to Fātma, 'I am giving you in marriage to the best man of my household'. Thereafter he blessed them and sprinkled water over them.[3]

Abu 'Umar relates from 'Ubaydullah b. Muhammad b. Samāk b. J'afar al-Hāshimi that the Prophet married Fātima to 'Aii after the battle of Uhad Fātima was then fifteen years and five and a half months of age and 'Ali was of twenty-one years and five months[4].

The *Musnad* of Ahmad b. Hanbal records an account of the marriage as narrated by 'Ali himself. He says, 'I wanted to

propose my marriage with Fātima but I hesitated to mention it to the Prophet since I had absolutely nothing at the time. Then I recalled our kinship and the Prophet's affection and kindness to me which emboldened me and I suggested it to him The Prophet asked, 'Do you have anything?' I said, 'No.' He asked again, 'I gave you the chain-armour *hatmia* on an occasion. Where is it?' I replied, 'I have got it with me.' 'Then give it to her,' said he. So I gave it to Fātima as a dower.'[5]

'Atā b. al-Sā'ib relates from his father who heard 'Ali saying, 'The Prophet gave her a bed-sheet, a water-bag and a leather pillow stuffed with bark (of a fragrant grass) as dowry.'[6]

Economic Condition of 'Ali

'Ali and Fātima who were dearest to Allah's beloved Prophet led a frugal life of privation like the Prophet himself. Hannād relates from 'Atā: 'I have been told that once 'Ali said, 'There was the time when we had nothing to eat for several days nor had the Prophet anything. Once in those days when I was going somewhere I found a *dīnār* lying on the path. I stood there for some time unable to decide whether I should pick it up or not, but at last my indigence compelled me to take it. So I purchased some flour from the merchants who had brought grains on their camels and gave it to Fātima to prepare some breads. She started kneading it but she had grown so weak because of hunger that the pan repeatedly slipped hurting her. She made breads somehow and then I went to the Prophet to inform him of it. He replied, 'Take it, God has made this provision available to you.'[7]

Hannād al-Daynauari al-Sh'abi reports that 'Ali said, 'When I married Fātima b. Muhammad we had only a sheep-skin on which we slept in the night and feeded our goat during the day. We had no servant.'[8]

Tabrāni has reported an incident on the authority of reliable narrators. He says, 'Fātima said that one day the Prophet came to her and said, 'Where are my children?'[9] She told the Prophet that they had absolutely nothing by way of edibles that morning.

Their father had therefore taken them out, saying, 'If they remain in the house, they would weep but you have nothing to satisfy their hunger.' Fātima added, 'He had gone to (that) Jew.' The Prophet then went to the place indicated by Fātima and found the children playing with a pitcher, with some damaged dates flung nearby. The Prophet said to 'Ali, ' 'Ali, take the children to home. The sun is getting hot.' 'Ali replied, 'O Prophet, we did not have a grain at our house since this morning. If you wait a bit, I may collect some of these dates for Fātima' The Prophet sat down and 'Ali collected the dates in a piece of cloth. Then he took up the two children and returned to his house.''[10]

Bukhāri relates on the authority of 'Ali that Fātima had been sick and tired of working the handmill. When she came to know that some slaves have been brought to the Prophet, she went to see him but the Prophet was then not present. She told the purpose of her visit to 'Āi'sha who communicated the message to the Prophet. 'Ali says that the Prophet came to his house and reached the place where he and his wife had already lain down to sleep. 'Ali tried o get up but the Prophet forbade him. Then he felt the coolness of the Prophet's feet on his chest. Now the Prophet said to them, 'Should I tell you something better than what you have asked for? When you go to sleep recite *Allāh-o-Akbar* 34 times, *Alhamdu Lillah* 33 times and *Subhān Allāh* 33 times, for this would be better for you than what you had demanded.'[11] Another version of this report also quotes the Prophet as saying: 'I will not give you anything in preference to ashāb-i-suffah[12] suffering the pangs of hunger. I have nothing to meet their expenses and I intend to sell these slaves and spend the sale-proceeds on them '[13]

Love for the Prophet

'Ali's hardships and privations never stood in his way to do all he could to relieve the Prophet of his difficulties so that the latter may devote his energies unstintly to the preaching of Islam and striving for it.

Ibn 'Asākir relates on the authority of 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās:

'One day the Prophet had to go without food. 'Ali came to know of it and went in search of some work so that he may earn something to meet the needs of the Prophet. He came upon the grove of a Jew and engaged himself in irrigation of that grove on the condition that he would be paid one date for every bucket of water supplied by him. He drew seventeen buckets and the Jew allowed him to take dates of any kind he wanted. 'Ali chose to have the *ajwah*[14] dates. When 'Ali presented these to the Prophet, he asked, 'Where did you get it ?' 'Ali replied, 'I came to know that today you were without food, so I went in search of work to provide something for you.' The Prophet further asked, 'Did you do it for the love of God and His Messenger ?' When he replied in affirmative, the Prophet remarked, 'There is not a lover of Allah and His Apostle who is not inundated with poverty like a surging flood. Anyone who loves Allah and His Apostle should procure a chain-armour to protect himself against adversities.'[15]

Title of Love

The Prophet used to call 'Ali, out of love, as Abu Turāb. 'Abdullāh b. Abbās relates that once 'Ali went to Fātima and then returned to lay down in the mosque. In the meantime the Prophet happened to visit Fātima in her room and asked her, 'Where is your uncle's son ?' She replied that he had gone to the mosque. The Prophet came to the mosque and saw 'Ali sleeping whose wrap had slipped from his back and his back was covered with dust. The Prophet wiped the dust with his own hands and twice said to 'Ali, 'Get up, O Abu Turāb (meaning, father of dust or dust-laden.)'[16]

'Ali in Badr

The battle of Badr was fought in Ramadhān 2 A. H. This was the decisive encounter which not only smoothened the path of Islam but also changed the course of history.[17]

When the Prophet came to the battlefield facing the enemy, 'Utba b. Rabī'a stepped forth with his brother Shayba and his son Walīd and gave a challenge for single combat. Three men of

Ansār came out against him. The Quraishites asked, 'Who are you ?' They answered, 'Some of the Ansārs', whereupon the Quraishites said, 'We have nothing to do with you, but send forth against us our peers of our own tribe.'

The Prophet knew more than anybody else about the valour and courage of these men. They were the most experienced fighters of Quraish but the Prophet said, 'Arise, O Hamza, and arise, O 'Ali, and arise O, 'Ubayda'. They were the nearest kins of the Prophet whom he held most dear. But it was a crucial hour of danger. He did not demur to send them to the jaws of death. When the three came forward, the Quraishite chiefs said, 'Yes, these are nobler and our peers.' Now 'Ubayda was the eldest of them and he faced 'Utba, while Hamza faced Shayba and 'Ali slew Walīd. Hamza also killed his adversary and both turned to 'Utba with their swords and despatched him and bore away 'Ubayda who had been wounded, bringing him back to their ranks. 'Ubayda later died of the cuts received by him.[18]

S'ad relates in the *al-Tabaqāt al-Kubrā* from Qatāda : "Ali b. Abi Tālib was the standard-bearer of the Prophet in the battle of Badr.'[19] Ibn 'Āsākir narrates; 'The Prophet gave his sword, *the Zulfaqār*, to 'Ali in the battle of Badr and then donated it to him after the battle.

Battle of Uhad

The battle of Uhad was fought during Shawwāl in 3 A. H. God sent down His help to the Muslims and fulfilled His promise. The enemy fled in obvious rout. The women of Quraish bolted to save themselves. The Prophet had stationed 50 archers under 'Abdullāh b. Jubayr and instructed them saying; 'Keep the cavalry away from us with your arrows and let them not come on us from the rear whether the battle goes in our favour and against us, and keep at your place even if you see the birds falling upon our troops.'

But when the enemy beat a hasty retreat in confusion, the archers rushed to the enemy camp for the spoils since they thought that the battle had been won. They started calling the people to

help themselves with the spoils. 'Abdullāh b. Jubayr, their leader, reminded the archers of the Prophet's instruction, but none paid any heed to him as they considered the enemy's return to be inconceivable. The enemy cavalry was, however, in readiness to take advantage of the situation and no sooner than the archers left their position, they mounted an attack from the rear. They also started calling out: 'Muhammad has been killed.' The ranks of Muslims were folded up and they had to retreat as the enemy returned in full force to strike again. The victory of Muslims turned into their defeat. In the meantime some of the enemy troops were able to reach the Prophet. The Apostle of God was hit by a stone so that he fell on his side and one of his front teeth was smashed,[20] his face bruised, and the lips injured. Muslims were not aware where the Prophet was. 'Ali, however, reached the Prophet and held him while Talha b. 'Ubaydullāh helped the Prophet to get up. As the Prophet stood up, Mālik b. Sinān licked the blood from the Prophet's face.[21]

Sahl b. S'ad was once asked what had happened to the Prophet at Uhad. The reply given by him has been preserved by Bukhāri. It reads: 'I fully remember who cleaned the wounds of the Prophet, who was pouring water and what medicine was applied. 'Ali was pouring water which he had brought in his shield. When Fātima saw that the blood was oozing more quickly than being stopped by water; she tore a corner of a mat, burnt and placed it on the cut in the Prophet's head. The wound thus stopped bleeding.'[22]

Ibn Kathīr says that 'Ali was present in Uhad, holding the command of the right flank. After the death of Mus'ab b. 'Umayr, he got hold of the standard of war, and killed a large number of infidels. He washed the bleeding wound on the face of the Prophet who had received a cut in his head and lost two teeth.'[23]

'Ali's Valour: Knightly Skill

The Battle of Ditch or Trenches took place in the month of Shawwāl, 5 A. H. It was an encounter which had far-reaching

consequences and helped in spreading the message of Islam. It was a fateful battle in which the Muslims had to pass through an ordeal they had never faced earlier. The following verses of the Qur'ān give a graphic description of the severe trial of Muslims.

> When they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when eyes grew wild and hearts reached to the throats, and ye were imagining vain thoughts concerning Allah.
>
> There were the believers sorely tried, and shaken with a mighty shock.[24]

'Ali displayed his military skill, for the first time, in this battle. The Muslims had dug a trench, on the advice of Salmān, the Persian, on the north-western side of Medīna for this was the only way that the enemy could take to enter the city. The trench separated Muslims from their enemy numbering 10,000. When the enemy cavalry came near Medīna at full gallop, they were taken aback by the trench for the device was novel to them. They went round in search of a narrow strip of the trench. Some beat their horses so that they dashed through it and carried them into the territory of Medīna. One of these horsemen was 'Amr b. Abdu Wudd who was considered a match for a thousand combatants. He challenged the Muslims to face him.

'Ali came forward, saying: 'Amr did you swear by God that if any man of Quraish offered you two alternatives would accept one of them ?'

'Yes, I did', replied 'Amr.

'Then,' said 'Ali, 'I invite you to Allāh and His Apostle and to Islam'

Amr said, 'I have no use for them.'

'Then I call you to face me' rejoined 'Ali

'Why', said 'Amr, 'O son of my brother, by God, I do not want to kill you.'

'But I do want to kill you', retorted 'Ali.

'Amr was flushed with anger. He got off from his horse and hamstrung it and hit its face; then he advanced on 'Ali. 'Amr fought; jostled with 'Ali, made thrusts and parried, but 'Ali

ultimately cut off 'Amr's head with a sweeping slash of his scimitar.[25]

Another version of the incident records that 'Amr challenged the Muslims, saying, 'Who will fight me, O Muslims?' and said tauntingly, 'Where is the paradise of which you say your martyrs go to?' 'Why do you not send anyone to face me?' 'Ali got up twice and asked the Prophet's permission to fight him, but he told 'Ali to sit down. 'Amr repeated his challenge the third time. 'Ali rose again saying, 'O Prophet of God, O Prophet of God.' The Prophet said to 'Ali, 'Do you know that he is 'Amr.' But 'Ali insisted to fight even if he were 'Amr. The Prophet accorded permission, and 'Ali went forward and told 'Amr his name. He said in reply, 'Let it be one of your uncles who is older than you, my nephew, for I do not want to shed your blood.' 'Ali answered, 'But I do want to shed your blood.' He became angry and advanced to fight. 'Ali ultimately killed him.[26]

The war came to an end because of the misunderstanding arising between Quraish and their allies Bani Qurayza. Then, in a cold and cloudy night, a violent hurricane uprooted the tents of the besieging army and overthrew their cooking pots.[27] The Apostle said to his companions on that occasion, 'The Quraish shall not come at you after this year; you would be attacking them hereafter.'[28]

Treaty of Hudaybia—'Ali's regard for the Prophet

The treaty of Hudaybia was signed in Dhi Q'ada, 6 A. H. After opposing the entry of Muslims into Makkah and protracted negotiations the Quraish sent Suhayl b. 'Amr to settle the terms of treaty. Suhayl proposed a written agreement and 'Ali was sent for to write the same. The Prophet began to dictate: 'In the name of Allāh, *Rahmān*—(the Beneficent), *Rahīm* (the Merciful).' Suhayl protested: 'I do not recognise *Rahmān*,' but write, 'In thy name, O Allāh after the custom of the Arabs'. The Prophet asked 'Ali to write as suggested by Suhayl. Then the Prophet asked 'Ali to write; 'This is what Muhammad, the Messenger of God has agreed.' Suhayl again objected, 'If we had witnessed that

you were God's Messenger we would not have turned you away from the house of God nor fought you.' The Prophet replied, 'I am God's Messenger even if you disbelieve me,' but he asked 'Ali to write, 'Muhammad b. 'Abdullāh,' as suggested by Suhayl. The Prophet directed 'Ali to rub out what he had written earlier. 'Ali was adament; he said, 'By God I cannot do it.' The Apostle of God asked 'Ali to indicate the place to be rubbed out so that he may expunge it.[29]

The Expedition to Khaybar

The battle of Khaybar was fought by the end of Muharram in the seventh year of *hijrah*.[30] It was in the battles fought in this expedition that the intrepidity and fighting mettle of 'Ali was demonstrated before the Prophet. God had destined that this Jewish settlement which occupied a strategic position in Arabia, should fall to Muslims at the hands of 'Ali.

Khaybar was a Jewish colony comprising several citadels some of which were virtually impregnable It was, in fact, the last but most formidable Jewish stronghold in Arabia. The Jews of Khaybar had been in league with the Jews of Medīna and other enemy tribes, and had always been conspiring with them against the Muslims. The Prophet, therefore, had decided to get rid of their intrigues once for all.

Khaybar lay 70 miles to the north-east of Medīna. The Prophet marched against Khaybar with a force of 1400. The Prophet came at the forts and started overpowering them one by one. Then came the turn of the fort of Al-Qamūs which appeared to be impenetrable. 'Ali was then suffering from ophthalmia. After a few unsuccessful charges, the Prophet announced: 'Tomorrow I will give the standard to the man who loves Allah and His Apostle and he will conquer the fort.' Now everybody wondered whether he would be chosen for this great honour.

The Apostle sent for 'Ali, applied his spittle to 'Ali's eyes and prayed for his success. 'Ali was cured in no time; he was given the standard. 'Ali asked the Prophet, 'Should I fight them until they become believers like us?' 'You should first call them

to Islam and tell them of their obligations to God,' replied the Prophet, 'for, if even one man is rightly guided through you, it would be better than innumerable costliest camels.'[31]

'Ali's combat with Jewish Warrior

As 'Ali entered the Al-Qamūs citadel, the famous Jewish warrior Marhab came forward reciting verses about his valour and deeds. Each attacked the other; 'Ali's sword slashed Marhab's helmet and the skull and broke his jaws.[32] Death of Marhab decided the issue and the fort fell to Muslims. Ibn Sayba reports in his *Musnad* on the authority of Layth that the latter once saw Abu J'afar[33] who was then in a melancholy mood. He said weepingly that Jābir had told him that on the day the battle of Khaybar was fought, 'Ali lifted up the door of Khaybar which enabled Muslims to enter the fort and conquer the city. The door was so heavy that when they tried later on to lift it up, no less than forty men could move it.'[34]

Muhammad b. Is'hāq relates from 'Abdullāh b. Hasan who heard it from certain other members of his family that a Jew struck 'Ali whose shield fell down. So he lifted up a door using it as shield until the fort was conquered.

Abu Rāf'ey reports that he and seven of his comrades tried on the day of battle to overturn the door, but they could not do it. Layth relates from J'afar, who heard it from Jābir, that 40 men were able to lift the door up.[35]

Absolute Trust in God

In Ramadhān, 8 A. H., when the Prophet decided to lead an expedition to Makkah, he ordered preparations to be made for a foray. He did not inform the people about his destination and prayed God, 'O Allah: keep it concealed from the eyes of Quraish so that we may take them by surprise in their land.'[36]

Hātib b. Abi Balt'ā was a companion who had migrated to Medina from Makkah and had also fought at Badr. He was a client of Quraish and his family was still in Makkah. As he had no other relative there who could protect his dependants, he

thought of helping the Quraish so that they may be considerate to his family. He wrote a letter saying that the Prophet intended to come at them and gave it to a woman to carry it to Quraish. He also paid her some money. This was obviously a blunder; may God forgive him. Later on the Apostle overlooked his error and said to him :, 'Who knows that God has looked favourably on those who were at Badr,' and then added, 'Do as you please, for I have forgiven you.'[37]

The woman who had to carry this letter put it on her head and then plaited her locks over it and went off. The Prophet was informed of it by God and he ordered 'Ali and Zubayr to go after her. He told them that they would find a woman going on a camel in a grove at Khākh,[38] carrying a letter for Quraish. Both 'Ali and Zubayr rode away on their horses at a gallop and overtook the woman at the place told by the Prophet. They made her dismount and asked about the letter. She feigned ignorance and they searched her saddle but found nothing. 'Ali swore to God that the Prophet could not be mistaken nor could they, and if she did not produce the letter they would strip her. When she saw that they were earnest she told them to turn aside, and then she let down her locks and drew out the letter and gave it to them. They took it to the Prophet.[39]

Prophet's Laudatory Remarks

The battle of Tabūk took place in the month of Rajab, 9 A. H. It was a momentous engagement of far-reaching consequences which went a large way in shaping the attitude of the Arabian tribers towards Islam and cast its shadow on future developments. The Prophet put Medīna in the charge of Muhammed b. Muslama al-Ansāri and left behind 'Ali to look after his family during his absence. 'Ali complained that the hypocrites were going about spreading false rumours about him. The Prophet said in reply: 'Are you not satisfied that you are unto me as Aaron was unto Moses, except that there will be no Prophet after me ?'[40]

When the Apostle left 'Ali in Medina to deputise for him,

he is reported to have said: "O Messenger of God! you are leaving me among the women and children."[41]

In the Year of Deputations

After the conquest of Makkah and successful completion of the expedition of Tabūk, in 9 A. H., representatives of different Arab tribes started calling upon the Apostle for accepting Islam in quick succession.[42] One such deputation came from Yemen. They recited the verse :

> Tomorrow shall we meet our friends, Muhammad and his comrades !

When the Prophet saw them, he said: 'The people of Yemen have come to you. They have a gentle disposition and the tenderest heart. Faith belongs to Yemen and wisdom is their asset.[43]

The Apostle had earlier sent Khālid b. Walīd with a party to invite the people of Yemen to Islam. He stayed there for six months, preaching Islam to them, but his call remained unresponded. 'Ali was thereafter deputed by the Prophet with a letter which was read out by 'Ali to the people of Hamadān. The entire tribe thereupon accepted Islam. When 'Ali communicated the news to the Prophet in a letter, he prostrated before God in thanksgiving and then raising his head he said. 'Peace be upon Hamadān, peace be upon Hamadān'.[44]

'Ali Deputizing for the Prophet

Haj was made incumbent in 9 A. H. The Prophet sent Abu Bakr in command of the Haj to enable the Muslims to perform the pilgrimage in conformity with the Islamic injunctions. About 300 persons from Medīna accompanied Abu Bakr.

Then the verses of *Surah Bar'at* were revealed to the Prophet who sent for 'Ali and asked him to communicate the opening verses of the *Surah* to the Haj pilgrims on the day of sacrifice (10th Dhil Hijja). He also directed 'Ali to tell them that no unbeliever would enter paradise, no polytheist would make pilgrimage after that year; no naked person would circumambulate the K'aba;[45] and he who has a covenant with the Apostle would

have it for the rest of his life.

'Ali went on the camel of the Prophet. When Abu Bakr saw 'Ali, he asked : 'Have you come as the Head or as an envoy ?' 'Ali replied : 'Just to convey the message.' They went on together and Abu Bakr superintended the Haj. When the day of sacrifice came 'Ali proclaimed what the Prophet had asked him to announce.[46]

The Farewell Pilgrimage

'Ali joined the Prophet during his journey for the Farewell Pilgrimage. On the day of sacrifice, the Prophet himself sacrificed 63 camels—the number of years the Prophet lived—and asked 'Ali to sacrifice the remainder of the 100 camels he had brought for sacrifice. Having completed the Haj, the Prophet asked the people to go back to their homes. Thereafter he set forth for Medīna.

When the Prophet arrived at Ghadir-Khum,[47] he addressed the people in which he praised 'Ali and said : ''Ali is the friend and patron of those to whom I am a friend and patron.' The Prophet concluded his speech with the supplication: 'O Allah ! Succour him who supports him ('Ali) and be hostile to him who bears ill-will to him '[48] The occasion for this oration arose because of certain persons, who had been displeased with 'Ali, had complained to the Prophet that 'Ali had been unjust and miserly with them. These people had been with 'Ali in Yemen and had disliked some of his decisions which were just and impartial but against their wishes.[49] Ibn Kathīr is on record that after performing the pilgrimage the Prophet left for Medīna. On Monday, the 28th Dhil Hijja he delivered a significant sermon at a place known as Ghadīr Khum. The Prophet who was standing beneath a tree, spoke of different matters and then dilated on the virtues of 'Ali, his sense of justice and trustworthiness, and his close association with him. The address by the Prophet removed all misunderstandings that some people had about 'Ali. Ibn Kathīr further says: 'There are a large number of reports, both authentic and inauthentic, collected by the scholars of *hadīth* as they usually

do, but this is what is proved after their sifting and critical examination.'[50]

Death of the Prophet

At last the time came when the Prophet breathed his last. Like all mortals born on earth, Allah had already alluded to it in the Qur'ān.

> And Muhammad is naught but a messenger, and messengers have surely passed away before him. Will you then, if he dies or is killed, turn round on your heels.[51]

The message the Apostle had brought had been enunciated and the commandments of God made known to humanity The Prophet had seen people entering the fold of Islam successively in large numbers and the stage had been set for its dissemination all over the world. The Prophet had no qualms about the sincerity and devotion of those whom he had guided and trained, their understanding of his message and acting on it unswervingly. His companions had attained the level where they could be trusted to carry on his mission accurately and adequately. The turn of events was a clear pointer to the fact that the Prophet was about to leave this fleeting world ; he had given indications that now he had set his heart on meeting his Lord. In his sermons and admonitions he had several times alluded to his approaching end. He had given away whatever he had of the wordly belongings. It is reported that during his last illness five or nine pieces of gold coins had been left with the Prophet. He said to 'Āisha, 'How shall I face God with these in my possession. Give them away in charity.'[52]

While the Prophet lay in the grip of falling sickness, he took a bath and tried to get up, but fell unconscious. On regaining consciousness he enquired if the people had offered prayers. On being informed that they had not, and that they were awaiting his arrival in the mosque for performing the *'isha* prayers, he sent for Abu Bakr so that he may lead the prayers. Abu Bakr was excessively tender-hearted and hence he asked 'Umar to perform that task. But 'Umar declined, saying, 'You

are more worthy of it.' Abu Bakr led the prayers for a day or two. On an occasion the Apostle of God felt some relief and went to the mosque supported by 'Abbās and 'Ali. It was the time of *zuhr* and Abu Bakr was about to lead the prayers. Abu Bakr wavered, but the Prophet gave him a sign to begin it and asked those supporting him to let him be seated.

Abu Bakr thus led the congregation while the Prophet was leading the prayers sitting beside Abu Bakr.[53]

'Ali relates that the Prophet bade the people to be punctual in prayers, pay the poor-due and fulfil their obligations to slaves and maid-servants. 'Āi'sha relates that she was looking at him when he raised his gaze to the sky and said, 'Verily, with the Most Exalted Companion, with the Most Exalted Companion.' The Prophet had a basin and a cup of water before him. He repeatedly wet his fingers and passed them on his face, saying, 'There is no god save God; death has its own agony'. He stretched fingers of his left hand, saying again, 'Verily with the Most Exalted Companion' twice and with these words on his lips, yielded the breath. His hand fell down towards the cup.[54]

The news of the Prophet's death struck his companions like a thunderbolt. Such was their love and esteem for him that they felt like children orphaned all of a sudden. They were shocked and saddened beyond description.

The Prophet's departure was naturally more agonizing for the members of his clan and family, specially Fâtima and 'Ali. Their distress was exceptional but they bore it with extraordinary fortitude because of their strength of faith and acquiescence to the will of God—the qualities they had inherited and imbibed through the guidance imparted by the Prophet of God.

The members of the Prophet's family performed the last rites of his burial; nobody shed a drop of tear keeping in view the instructions given by the Prophet for such occasions.

The Prophet had cursed the Jews and Christians for turning the sepulchers of their prophets into places of worship. This was to be scrupulously avoided by all.

The Prophet had breathed his last on the 12th of Rab'i-ul-

Awwal after the sun had passed the meridian. He was then sixty-three years of age. This was the darkest hour for Muslims; indeed, a day gloomy and lamentable for the entire humanity just as his birth had singnalled hope and cheerfulness for the whole world.[55]

Notes and References :

1. *Al-Tabaqāt al-Kubra, op. cit.* Vol. III, p. 23.
2. *Al-Bidayāh wan Nihāyh, op. cit.* Vol. III, pp. 241-47.
3. Shāh Waliullah, *Izālat-al-Khifa Bain Khilāfat al-Khulfa'*, Lahore, 1976, p. 254.
4. Shāh Waliullah is disinclined to accept this report since the battle of Uhad was fought in Shawwāl 3 A. H. when 'Ali asked Fātima to wash the blood stains from his body. This would not have been possible unless they were already married. (*Izālat al-Khifa*, p. 254).

   The fact is that they were already married at the time. It has been historically established that Hasan was born in mid-Shaban or Ramadhan 3 A. H. (Ibn 'Asākir's *Tarīkh Damishq* and historical treatises mention this fact). Therefore, the report that they were married after the battle of Uhad which took place in Shawwal 3 A.H. cannot be correct.
5. Ahmad b. Hanbal, *Musnad.* There are reliable reports to show that Abu Bakr had helped 'Ali in making preparations for the marriage. Even Shia scholars have accepted these reports (Shaikh J'afar al-Tūsi, *Al-Umāli*, Najaf Ashraf. Vol. I, p. 39).
6. *Musnad Ahmad, Egypt.*
7. *Kanz-al-'Ummāl, op. cit.* Vol. VII, p. 328. This report also forms part of a longer narration by Abu Dawūd related on the authority of Sahl b. S'ad (*Sunan*, Vol. I, p. 240.)
8. *Kanz-al- Ummāl, op. cit.* Vol. VII, p. 133.
9. *Meaning* Hasan and Husain.
10. Mundhari, Hāfiz Zaki-ud-din, *Al-Targhīb wal Tarhīb*, (Cairo, IInd. Ed., 1954) Vol. V, p. 171.
11. Bukhari Muhammad b. Ismail, *Al-Jāmi al-Sahih, Bāb al-Jihād.*
12. *Lit.* People of the bench i. e., the indigent companions who used to live on a plateform adjacent to the Prophet's mosque.
13. Ahmad b. Ali b. Hajar al-Asqalani, *Fath-ul-Bāri*, Cairo, 1311 A. H.. Vol. VII, pp. 23-24. These words have also been reported by Ali.
14. A delicious and one of the best qualities of dates grown in Medina.

15. *Kanz-al-'Ummāl, op. cit.* Vol. II, p. 321.
16. *Al Jami al-Sahīh, op. cit.*
17. For details see the Author's *Muhammad Rasūlullāh, op. cit.* pp. 199-213
18. *The Life of Muhammad, op. cit.* p. 299 *Al-Sirah Ibn Hishām*, Vol. I, p. 625.
19. *Al-Tabaqāt al-Kubra, op. cit.* Vol. III, p. 23.
20. Allama Tāhir Patni says in the *Majm'a Bahār al-Anwār* that only a part of the front teeth was broken.
21. The details of the Battle of Uhad can be seen in any biography of the Prophet or the author's *Muhammad Rasūlullāh*, pp. 215. 31.
22. *Al-Bidāyah wan Nihāyah, op. cit.* Vol. VII, p. 224.
23. For details of the Battle see *Muhammad Rasūlullāh*, (pp. 232-43) by the author.
24. Q. 33 : 10-11.
25. *Al-Bidayah wan Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 105.
26. *Ibid.* p. 106.
27. See the concluding verses of the *Sūrah Ahzāb* and biographies of the Prophet.
28. *Al-Bidāyah wan Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. IV., p. 115.
29. Muslim b. al-Hajjāj al-Qushairi. *Sahīh Muslim*, Kitāb-al-Jihād wal-Siyar, chapter Sulh Hudaybia, Dar al-Jhyā al-Kutub al-'Arabiyah, (1955).
30. A detailed account of the expedition to Khaybar can be seen in *Muhammad Resūlullāh*, pp. 245-306.
31. The detailed report is to be found in *Sahih Bukhāri* and *Sahīh Muslim* in the chapter relating to Khaybar.
32. *Sirah Ibn Hishām* maintains that Muhammad b. Masalama killed Marhab (p. 334) but it is not correct. Tabri's report that 'Ali slew Marhab is correct since it is supported by Muslim who has also cited the verses recited by 'Ali on that occasion. Muslim has given the chain of narrators of this report which is more reliable (*Sahīh Muslim, Kitab-al-Jihād, hadīth* No. 1807).
33. His name was Muhammad al-Bāqir b. Zainul 'Abidīn b. Husain.
34. *Kanz-al-'Ummāl, op. cit.*, Vol. 15, p. 120. Ibn Kathīr holds that according to the norms of *hadīth* criticism, the report about lifting up of the door of Khaybar is weak because the report is intersected and one of the narrators is not reliable. He also maintains that the report handed down from J'afar through Muhammad Bāqir is not completely reliable. However, this report has been communicated through more than one chain of narrators and is not beyond the realm of possibility for it is a well-known incident. If the reliablity of the

narrators is not established, the incident, by itself, will not be against the beliefs of the Sunnite sect which holds the view that the saints and godly men are sometimes enabled by God to perform miraculous feats. This is also established by the Qur'ān.

'Whenever Zakariya entered the sanctuary (where she was), he found provision by her. He said, O Mary, whence cometh unto thee this (food).' She answered : 'It is from Allah. Surely Allah provides for whom He will without stint.' (3 : 33)

And 'Ali is unanimously held as the precursor of the saints in Islam.

35. *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihayāh, op. cit.* Vol. VII, p. 225.
36. Ibn Qayyim, Shams-ud-din Muhammad b. Abu Bakr, *Zād al-Ma'ād fi Huda Khnir al-'Ibād* (Al-Matba al-Maimana, Misr), Vol. I, p. 421; *The Life of Muhammad, op. cit*. p. 544.
37. *Zād al-Ma'ād*, op. cit., Vol. I, 421.
38. A place at a distance of 12 miles from Medina on the road to Makkah.
39. *Zād al-Ma'ād, op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 421. The incident has also been recorded in the authentic works on *hadith*.
40. Bukhari, *Al-Jām'i al-Sahīh*, Chapter Tabūk.
41. *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 225.
42. See *Muhammad Rasūlullāh*, pp. 365-72.
43. *Bukharī, Al-Jāmī al-Sahih; Zād al-Ma'ād op. cit* , Vol. II, p. 33.
44. *Zād al-Ma'ād, op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 33.
45. Some of the polytheists circumambulated the Ka'aba after taking off their clothes under the misconception that it was not fit to go round the House of God with the clothes with which they had committed sins.
46 *The Life of Muhammad, op. cit.*, p. 617-19 *Al-Sirah Ibn Hishām, op. cit.*, Vol. II, 543-46.
47. A place midway between Makkah and Medina about 3 km. from Jahfa'.
48. Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Sīrah al-Nabāwīyah*, Vol. IV, pp. 415-416 (on the authority of Ahmad and Nassā'i).
49. *Ibn Kāthīr, As-Sīrah-al-Nabawiyah, op. cit., Ibid*, p. 414.
50. *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 208.
51. Q. 3 : 144.
52. *Musnad Ahmad*, Vol. VI. p. 49.
53. *Sahīh Bukhāri*.
54. Ibn Kāthīr, *Al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyah, op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 473 (on the authority of Imām Ahmad).
55. Summarised from *Muhammad Rasūlullāh*, pp. 385-96.

III

ALI DURING THE REIGN OF CALIPH ABU BAKR

The Decisive Hour

The death of the Prophet was a decisive as well as a dangerous juncture for the life and death of Islam. Islam was, at best, like a small island surrounded by the sea of paganism, polytheistic beliefs, unruly traditions of the Arabian nomads and despotic kingdoms. Arabs had only recently accepted Islam but they had no experience of a corporate social order or leading a disclipined life.

All the great religions of the world which had in their own time prevailed over vast spaces and claimed allegiance of great many peoples and nations had already so deviated from their original teachings or fallen prey to internal schisms and intrigues or external encroachments that they had become almost lifeless. The only reason why these religions had lost their vital spark was that those who had been charged with the responsiblity of guiding their co-religionists, after the death of the founders of those religions, lacked any deep perception of the teachings and objectives of their religions, or were short of sincerity and steadfastness so essential for the immediate successors of prophets and architects of great religions. They were also deficient in zeal and carefulness and anxiety required for preserving the purity of their faiths at a crucial stage. Often they were

worldly-minded or had a craving for fame and honour. The result was that these religions were assimilated by philosophies and cults that had been designed to destroy them. It also happened sometimes that a religion became resigned to the current of the time in order to serve the interests of potentates but the result was that it became a tool of exploitation, gained a little advantage but lost heavily. Brahminism, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism had to undergo such transformations in their initial stages. Judaism was no exception to this misfortune and the Christianity was caught by a dangerous manipulation soon after Jesus Christ.

Ancient Religions

Let us first see what happened to Judaism and Christianity, both of which were based on revelation and Islam recognises their followers as 'people of the Book.' Contamination of Judaism in its earliest period has been thus described in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*; 'The thunderings of the Prophets against idolatry show, however, that the cults of the deities were deeply rooted in the heart of the Israelitish people, and they do not appear to have been thoroughly suppressed until the return from the Babylonian exile......Through mysticism and magic many polytheistic customs again found their way among the people, and the Talmud confirms the fact that idolatrous worship is seductive.'[1]

Christianity had fallen a prey, in its very infancy, to the misguided fervour of its overzealous evangelists, polytheism of the Romans and unwarranted interpretations of its tenets by ignorant church fathers. The monotheistic creed preached by Jesus Christ had been overcast by the gloomy clouds of deviations for which St. Paul (c. 10-65) was primarily responsible for he had usurped the authority of expounding the Christian creed as head of the church. A number of Christian scholars have since reached the conclusion that the present Christian creed of Trinitarianism implying incarnation and anthropomorphism, taken over from Buddhism, was introduced into Christianity not by the apostles of Jesus Christ but by St. Paul. These heterodox beliefs have been preserved as the official creed

of the Orthodox Church during the last nineteen hundred years.

Ancient Hinduism or Brahminism had changed its course in the very beginning of its journey : shorn of its simplicity and spiritual link with the Lord and Master of the world, it had developed a passion for idolatry and multiplicity of deities so earnestly that their number is reported to have reached 330 millions.[2]

Buddhism fared no better than Hinduism : the mutilated form of later Buddhism had hardly preserved anything of Gautama Buddha's original teachings. It also became so intensely idolatrous in its creed and practice that there remained almost nothing to distinguish it from Hinduism except the names of idols and deities. Their fervour for idolatry escalated to the extent that *but*, the word for idol in Persian and Urdu, came to be derived from Buddha itself.[3]

Zoroastrianism, too, met the same fate as maintained by the authors of the *Religions of the World*. They say :

> "Zoroaster had hardly passed from the scene before a reaction in the nature of a counter-reformation restored the old gods with their ancient cults. Tney were welcomed with enthusiasm by persons who had long found satisfaction in them. The magi priests, who spearheaded the restoration, celebrated their return to the ancient alters. Zoroaster's faith, which had bravely set forth as monotheism, now found itself submerged in a reinstated polytheism."[4]

Succession to the Prophet—Demands and Conditions

The death of the holy Prophet was as inevitable as the difficulties that the incident was likely to bring about. This was the way of God which never changes.

> (That had been) the dispensation of Allah with those who have passed away, and thou shall not find any change in the dispensation of Allah.[5]

The only way to survive in such a difficult situation was to elect such a successor of the Prophet who had been gifted by God with

the qualities and capacity to reject all aberrations and deviations and was able to keep Islam strictly on the path chalked out by the Prophet. Such a man had to have the following qualities:—

(1) He must have enjoyed full confidence of the Prophet ever since his acceptance of Islam; the Prophet must have avouched his sincerity and entrusted to him the responsibility of acting on his behalf, particularly in matters relating to religion, and taken him in confidence in delicate affairs and on perilous occasions.

(2) He had to be a man of such indomitable courage and conviction that at a time when the entire fabric of faith was in danger, when other life-long companions of the Prophet had become dejected, he should have stuck to his guns. His determination to face the most adverse circumstances should have been reminiscent of the fortitue of the prophets of old, who never compromised on any matter pertaining to faith and creed.

(3) He should have had a deep comprehension of the religious truth and imbibed its spirit to the extent that he was never unmindful of the example set by the Prophet in times of war and peace, fear and calm, unity and breach and poverty and affluence.

(4) Pristine purity and integrity of his faith should have been a thing more cherished and precious to him than the honour of his own person or family and he should have always been prepared to make the greatest sacrifice for it, unshaken by any fear or favour.

(5) He should have made it the aim and purpose of his life to accomplish and make perfect the teachings of the Prophet without deflecting a hair's-breadth from them.

(6) He should have been unmindful of riches and fame and personal conveniences like the Prophet. His character should have been so spotless that he should have never conceived of taking any personal advantage of his position as a ruler nor allowed his family members to derive the slightest benefit from his status,

marking a complete break from the traditions of royalty in the neighbouring countries.

Abu Bakr—An Ideal Successor

Abu Bakr had all the abovementioned qualities. His life during the time of the Prophet and during the period of his caliphate demonstrates his steadfastness.[6] There is absolutely nothing—not even one incident—to cast any doubt about his character and demeanour.

The following incidents demonstrate that Abu Bakr had all the qualities mentioned above.

(1) To what extent the Prophet placed reliance on Abu Bakr is revealed by the fact that he had selected Abu Bakr to accompany him in the most dangerous journey of migration from Makkah to Medina. It was the time when the Prophet's enemies were waiting in ambush for him. No man endowed with reason could trust and share his secret with anyone in whom he did not have an implicit faith on such an occasion. The Prophet knew that any false step would mean a disaster and that those pursuing him would not leave any stone unturned to capture or kill him. A close confidant willing to lay down his life for his master would have alone been trusted to accompany anyone in such a hazardous journey.[7]

Abu Bakr's companionship on the journey undertaken by the Prophet for migration has been immortalized in the Qurān as 'second of the two.'

> When those who disbelieved banished him, the second of the two; when the two were in a cave, and when he said to his companion: do not grieve, verily Allah is with us.[8]

This is an honour solitary and unrivalled, that Abu Bakr enjoys among the Prophet's companions.

So far as the question of appointing anyone as a deputy to superintend the religious service is concerned, fasting and payment of the poor-due need no representative since these can be performed by every man individually; a deputy is required to

lead the prayers and to act as a director during the *haj*. Abu Bakr was the only companion who acted as the Prophet's vicegerent for these two religious services during the life-time of the Prophet.

Abu Bakr thus enjoys the unique distinction of being appointed by the Prophet to lead the prayers. 'Ubaydullāh b. 'Abdullāh relates; "I called upon 'Āisha and said: 'Is it possible that you tell me about the illness and death of the Prophet of God (peace be upon him) in some detail.' She replied, 'Of course. When the Prophet's illness became severe he enquired whether the people had performed the prayer. We said, 'No, they are waiting for you' The Prophet asked to bring water in a basin. It was brought and he sat down and took a bath. He fell unconscious as he tried to get up. On regaining consciousness after a short while he again asked if the people had performed the prayer. We said, 'No, they have not and are waiting for you.' The Prophet again asked to bring water in a basin. It was brought as desired by him. He tried to lift the basin, and fell unconscious. He regained consciousness before long and again asked if the people had performed prayers. He was again told that they had not, and were awaiting his arrival. Thereafter he lost consciousness and on regaining it after a short while he again repeated his question. We gave the same reply while people were sitting in the mosque expecting the Prophet to lead the *'isha* prayer. The Prophet sent for Abu Bakr to lead the congregation. When the message reached Abu Bakr, he asked 'Umar to superintend the prayer since he was very tender-hearted But 'Umar refused saying that he was more suitable for the task. Thus Abu Bakr acted as the *imām* during that period. When the Prophet felt somewhat better and the effect of illness decreased, he went out supported by two men, one of whom was 'Abbās. It was the time for *zuhr* prayer. Abu Bakr was about to lead the prayer but he hesitated when he saw the Prophet coming to the mosque. The Prophet signalled him to get ahead and lead the prayer. He asked those supporting him to let him be seated by the side of Abu Bakr. The Prophet

thus led the prayer in a sitting posture while Abu Bakr stood leading others.' 'Ubaydullah further says that after he listened this account from 'Āisha he went to 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās and asked him whether he should relate what he knew about the death of Prophet. 'Abdullāh b. 'Ābbās gave his consent and he rehearsed the report. 'Abdullāh b. 'Ābbās endorsed it and asked, "Did 'Āisha tell you the name of the person who supported the Prophet alongwith 'Ābbās in going to the mosque?" 'Ubaydullāh said,' No,' and then 'Abdullāh informed him: 'He was 'Ali'.[9]

There is another report also related by Abu Mūsā who says, 'When the Prophet became seriously ill he ordered the people to tell Abu Bakr to lead the prayers. 'Āisha said entreatingly, 'O Prophet of Allah, Abu Bakr is very tender-hearted. He will not be able to lead the prayer in place of you.' The Prophet repeated his order saying, 'Tell Abu Bakr to lead the prayer. Women speak in the same way as they did to Joseph.'[10]

The Prophet deputed Abu Bakr to direct the *haj* ceremonies in his place. It involved a great responsibility and meant a compliment to him. *Haj* was made incumbent in 9 A. H. and the Prophet sent Abu Bakr in command of the *haj* in that very year to enable the Muslims to perform the pilgrimage while the polytheists were at their pilgrim stations. The number of Muslim performing *haj* with Abu Bakr was 300.

(2) The inflexible determination and tenacity of Abu Bakr was revealed in the hour of greatest trial of the Muslims. The death of the Prophet had stunned the Muslims. Some of them even refused to accept that the Prophet could ever die. A man like 'Umar, known for his sagacity and stout heart, declared that the Prophet had not died. He asserted in the mosque before the people who had gathered there, 'The Prophet will not depart until all the disaffected have perished.'[11]

At this critical hour Muslims needed a man of iron-will. As soon as Abu Baker came to know what had happened, he came from his house and dismounted from his horse at the door of the mosque as 'Umar was speaking to the people. He paid no

attention to anyone and went in straight to 'Āisha's home where the Prophet was lying covered by a mantle. He uncovered the face of the Prophet and kissed him, saying, 'May my father and mother be a ransom for you. You have tasted the death which God had decreed: a second death will never overtake you. Then he replaced the mantle on the Prophet's face and went out. 'Umar was still speaking and he said, 'Gently, 'Umar, be quiet.' But 'Umar refused and went on talking, and when Abu Bakr saw that 'Umar would not be silent he went forward to the people who, when they heard him speaking, came to him leaving 'Umar. Giving thanks and praises to God he said, 'O men, if anyone worships Muhammad, let him know that Muhammad is dead; if anyone worships God, then God is alive, immortal.' Then he recited the Quranic verse.

> Muhammad is naught save an Apostle. Apostles have passed away before him. Can it be that were he to die or be killed, you would turn back on your heels ? He who turns back does no harm to God and God will richly recompense the grateful.[12]

Those who were present on the occasion testify: 'By God, it was as though the people did not know that this verse had come down until Abu Bakr recited it that day.' 'Umar said, 'When I heard Abu Bakr reciting this verse I was astounded and knew that the Prophet was indeed dead.'[13]

(3) How deep was his understanding of Islam and how zealous he was to adhere to the path shown by the Prophet is disclosed by his remark when he came to know that several Arab tribes had refused to pay the poor-due and questioned its validity.[14] His meaningful utterance reveals his emotions and state of mind, and helps to determine his place among the most earnest followers of Islam. Abu Bakr had asserted : 'Revelation has been discontinued, the *sharīah* has been completed: will the religion be curtailed while I am alive.'[15] Those who had refused to pay the poor-due claimed that they were Muslims and acknowledged other injunctions of Islam. This had made several eminent companions uncertain about the lawfulness of waging war against

them. But Abu Bakr was resolute and absolutely clear in his mind; he never vacillated in his stand. It is related that he said, 'I will fight these tribes even if they refuse to give a halter. Poor-due is a levy on wealth and, by God, I will fight him who diff-erentiates between the prayer and poor-due.[16]

There can be no denying the fact that refusal to pay the poor-due at that stage would have opened the way to deviation from the teachings of the Prophet and encouraged rebellion and anarchy. Had Abu Bakr been complaisant or luckewarm in suppressing the unruly tribes, aberrations would have started cropping up and nobody would have been able to curb them subsequently. Objections would have been raised about the con-gregational and Friday prayers being held in the mosques, the month of Ramadhān being earmarked for fasting and the rituals performed during the *haj* or similar other matters. The Prophet's successors or the caliphs and the institution of jurisconsults keeping a watch over the *sharī'ah*, Islamic injunctions and its limits would have been rendered ineffectual. Islam would have scattered like the pearls of a broken necklace immediately after the Prophet's death. The stern attitude adopted by Abu Bakr, avoiding the least acquiescence and indecision, therefore, seems to have been inspired by God. It incidently, evinces the truth of Islam and that it is still present in its original shape to this day.

(4) It is thus a historical fact that the role of Caliph Abu Bakr in the suppression of apostasy and the conspiracy to break up Islam in its very beginning, was indicative of the character of the prophets of God—none of whom had ever compromised with ungodliness in his own time. This was the characteristic required of a successor to the Prophet which was displayed in full measure by Abu Bakr during the period of his caliphate. Indeed, he deserves thanks and invocation of all Muslims from the first day to the last.

(5) Yet another decision taken by Caliph Abu Bakr reveals his acumen in the matters relating to the likes and dislikes of the Prophet, the underlying reasons therefor and his sincerity to implement them meticulously in accordance with the wishes of

the Prophet. Shortly before his death the Prophet had decided to despatch an expediton to Syria under Usāma. The army had actually left Madina and bivouaced at Juraf, at a little distance from Madina when the Prophet breathed his last. Abu Bakr insisted on its departure to give effect to his master's last wishes although Madina being hemmed in on all sides in those days, anyone would have hardly dared taking this action. There was the danger of apostates attacking Madina or other unruly tribes taking advantage of the chaotic conditions prevailing around the capital of infant Islamic State.

Abu Huraira has correctly estimated the far-reaching effect of the decision taken by Abu Bakr. Abul 'Āraj relates from Abu Huraira: 'I swear to God save whom no deity is there that God would not have been worshipped, if Abu Bakr had not ascended the caliphate.' Abu Huraira repeated it thrice over and then related the incident of sending the expedition under Usāma. He said, 'Abu Bakr despatched the army under Usāma, saying, 'I will not allow the army to return already sent by the Prophet: I will not fold the flag unfurled by the Prophet!' The result was that when Usāma passed the tribes which were disposed to rebellion and apostasy, they said to one another; 'Had these prople not been strong enough, they would not have ventured on this expedition. Let them go and face the Romans.' Thus the army went forth, fought the Romans and returned after defeating the enemy. Thus the tribes prone to defection were reassured and continued to remain votaries of Islam.'[17]

Those who turned apostates, repudiating Islam completely and those who gave up Islamic way of worship like prayers etc., and reverted to paganism have been placed by Khattābi in the first category of turncoats. Those who made a distinction between the prayers and the poor-due and denied the obligatory nature of the latter, were listed by Khattābi in the second category. Caliph Abu Bakr decided to fight both these groups on the ground that they were all guilty of apostasy. The latter group had rejected a duty made obligatory by Islam which amounted to its repudiation. This was the reason why Abu Bakr had

declared that he would fight those who drew a distinction between the prayers and the poor-due which was a levy on wealth.

There was also a third group which had refused to pay the poor-due to the Caliph. They desired either to utilize it themselves or spend it within their own tribe under their own supervision, This group also included certain persons who were agreeable to pay the poor-due, but their chieftains had forbidden them to do so. Abu Bakr's reason for waging war against them was that they were rebels who had to be given battle according to the Quranic injunction and consensus of the Muslims. Allah had ordained :

> And if one party of them does wrong to the other, then fight the party which does wrong till it reverts to the commandment of Allah.[18]

Caliph Abu Bakr reduced all the insurgent tribes to order. Thereafter, he turned to the suppression of imposters, who had laid a claim to prophethood. Great battles were fought with them and they were finally defeated. The great imposter Musailama was killed.[19] Had this menace been allowed to survive, Islam would have been wiped out. Abu Bakr eradicated the bane of apostasy, crushed those who had denied to pay the poor-due and sent out eleven armies under different commanders who beat down the rebels of Sajāh, Bani Tamīm[20] and al-Fujāt with the result that the people of Bahrain, Mahra and Yemen were received back in Islam. The number of rebels and apostates who were sent to their doom in Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula is estimated to be fifty thousand.[21] Ibn Kathīr has correctly stated that :

> "Abu Bakr brought the fugitives of Islam back to its fold and truth was re-establised in its original shape. Complete uniformity was brought in the Arabian Peninsula and no difference remained between those living far or near."[22]

Muhammad b. Is'hāq, who has been cited by Ibn Kathīr, says :

"When Allah's Apostle died, apostasy broke out, Christianity

and Judaism held up their heads, hypocrisy cropped up and Muslims became like shrunken goat and sheep in a rainy and cold night, for the Messenger of Allah had bid farewell to this world. And this state of affair continued until Allah unified them under the leadership of Abu Bakr.[23]

"Abu Bakr despatched Khālid b. Walīd to Iraq who conquered a greater part of it. He also won the battles of al-Anbār and Dumat al-Jandal. In several other battles Islam emerged victorious."[24]

Thus the work of pacification of the Peninsula was completed by Abu Bakr. It gave Islam a foothold in the country of its origin which had to remain, for all times to come, its source and criterion. Islam's tide of conquest engulfed Iraq and Syria and the Muslims directed their efforts to bring in as much part of the globe as possible under Islam. They captured one country after another around Arabia and the process continued under Caliph 'Umar and Caliph 'Uthman. When Caliph Abu Bakr breathed his last Damascus had already fallen to the arms of Islam and the campaign culminating in the decisive battle of Yarmūk was almost in its last stages. Of a fact, all the subsequent conquests whether they were made during the caliphate of 'Umar and 'Uthman or in the Umayyad period owe their origin to the efforts made by Caliph Abu Bakr during his life-time. It was because of him that Islam reached the distant corners of the world.

(6) The two incidents related here are enough to demonstrate the frugal life of Abu Bakr, his disdain for the worldly comforts and extreme cautiousness in taking any advantage as the ruler of a mighty empire.

Once the wife of Abu Bakr expressed the desire to have some sweet dish, but Abu Bakr dismissed her saying that he did not possess the money to satisfy her desire. His wife suggested that she could save something from the daily expenses to purchase the material for preparing a sweet dish. Abu Bakr agreed and she made the savings over a period. When she gave that amount to Abu Bakr for purchasing the required material he

deposited it in the public treasury, saying, 'Experience shows that we can do with a smaller amount than what I have been taking as a stipend'. He also directed to reduce his stipend by the amount daily saved by his wife. He also made good the loss public treasury had suffered earlier by the excess amount of stipend from his private property."[25]

When Caliph Abu Bakr was about to die, he said to his daughter : 'O 'Āisha, the camel of which we used to drink milk and the cup in which we kept sauce and the mantle we wore are the things we used when we were the guardians of Muslims. After I am dead, send them to 'Umar'. His wish was complied with and the articles in question were sent to 'Umar who thereupon exclaimed, 'Abu Bakr, Allah may bless you. You have placed your successors in a difficult position.'[26]

Consultative Administration

In the ages past the temporal and spiritual leaderships were the preserve of particular families. When Islam made its advent the world was being crushed by these hereditary leaderships. Those who wielded the sceptre acted as autocrats although they had inherited the authority from their fathers, or in accordance with the will of outgoing kings, or usurped authority through machinations or superior prowess. Public good or interest of the people never had any say in the selection of the potentate. The entire income of the country was treated as personal property of the rulers whose ingenuity was always on the look out for increasing their incomes, accumulating vast treasures and making their lives as pleasurable as possible. It was not unoften that the kings displayed ostentatious magnificence and pageantry that defied one's imagination, and is now known only to those who have studied history. These rulers alienated from the common man by impassable barriers, were regarded as descendants of celestial beings.

The masses were, on the other hand, extremely poor and in great distress. The ever-increasing taxes, burdensome levies, conscriptions and forced labour had crushed the commonman

beyond description and they were forced to live like the beasts of burden.

There was also another dominion: it was the spiritual empire. Its sovereignty was vested in a particular family or its chosen individuals. Spiritual leadership was the domain of these people who were revered as demi-gods. Inherited by the son from his father and thus continuing from generation to generation, it had its own economic benefits. Those who were possessed of ecclesiastical authority manipulated it for satisfying their carnal desires. Treated as the intermediary between God and His creation, they had the power to make lawful what was unlawful and vice versa. They promulgated religious laws at their sweet-will. The Qur'ān has in its own inimitable manner given a vivid description of these people which cannot be improved upon by any one.

> O you who believe: surely many of the priests and monks (of the people of the book) devour the substance of men in falsehood and hinder (people) from the way of Allah.[27]

Among the Christians these priests were known by the name of 'Clergy.' A Syrian Christian scholar has defined the word as follows:

> "This name was given by the Christians to the persons ordained, or set apart, for the service of religion. Their name signifies 'a share' or 'inheritance' almost in the same sense as Pentateuch assigns priestly rights to the 'sons of Levi'......Among the ancient Egyptians and Hebrews a class was ordained for performing religious rites. The Christian church had from the very beginning ministers who formulated its policies. If the church was affluent and prosperous, the clergy-men took full advantage of it. They were not merely priests and spiritual guides but were also treated as the source of wisdom and knowladge. Under the Roman Empire they were exempt from all taxes. They were also not required to do any social service. Thay had, in a way, a dominion over the people, within their own sphere

and even outside it."[28]

Zoroastrianism of Iran was not different from Christianity. A paticular clan was marked out for priesthood. During the ages past the function was allocated to a tribe of Media and under Zoroastrianism the clan of 'al-Moghān held the charge of spiritual leadership.

The priestly clan was regarded as the vicegerent of God on earth, created to administer the kingdom of God. It was the prerogative of a particular clan to give birth to the holy men who were regarded as sharers of divinity and inherited the charge of oratories or fire-temples.[29]

Brahmins in India had the monopoly of everything sacred and spiritual. The religious law allocated them the highest place in society which could never be attained by anyone not belonging to that caste. "A Brahmin who remembers the *Rig Veda*," says the *Manu Shāstra*, "is absolutely sinless, even if he debases all the three worlds." Neither any tax could be imposed on a Brahmin, nor he could be executed for any crime. All religious rites were to be performed by the Brahmin alone.[30]

Islam abolished both these hereditary dominions which had been an instrument of tyranny and misery of the people of which the history of countries like Rome, Iran and India are replete with examples. Islam entrusted the responsibility of electing the Caliph to the Muslims; particularly those who were judicious and well-informed among them, and prescribed the method of mutual consultation for it. This was the reason why the holy Prophet had not expressly indicated who will be the head of the Muslim commonwealth after him. Had it been necessary or a part of his religious duty, the Prophet would have certainly done so. Had not Allah ordained the Prophet?

> O Messenger: Make known that which hath been revealed unto thee from thy Lord, for if thou do it not, thou will not have conveyed His Message. Allah will protect thee from mankind. Lo! Allah guideth not the disbelieving folk.[31]

At another place the divine revelation had clearly stated:

> That was Allah's way with those who passed away of old—and the commandment of Allah is certain destiny—who delivered the messages of Allah and feared Him, and feared none save Allah. Allah keepeth good account.[32]

'Ubaydullah b. 'Abdullāh b. 'Utba narrated that Ibn 'Abbās said: 'When Allah's Apostle was on his death-bed and there were certain persons in his house, the Prophet said: 'Come near, I will write for you something after which you will not go astray'. Some of them said, 'Allah's Apostle is seriously ill and you have the Qur'ān. Allah's Book is sufficient for us.' So the people in the house differed and started disputing. When their differences increased and discussion became louder, Allah's Apostle said, 'Go Away'.[33]

The Prophet remained alive for three days after this incident, but he did not ask for the writing material nor specified who would be his successor. He did in fact express a number of his last wishes but never mentioned the topic of his vicegerency.

Of the directions he gave during this period one was: '(Offer) prayers and be considerate to those placed in your charge (i. e. slaves and bondswomen).'

'Ali also relates, 'The Prophet had given instructions in regard to prayer and poor-due and mildness to those placed under one's charge.'[34]

'Āisha and Ibn 'Abbās narrate: 'When the time for departure of Allah's Apostle arrived, he started covering his face with a black blanket and remained so for a while. Then he uncovered his face and said, 'Allah's curse be on the Jews and Christians for they took the graves of their prophets as places of worship.' The Prophet thus warned and forbade his followers to act like them.'[35]

In regard to the incident relating to the Prophet's desire to bring some writing material to him, 'Abbās Mahmūd al-'Aqqād writes:

> "The allegation that 'Umar came in the way of Prophet's dictating a testament and nomination of 'Ali as the

Caliph is extremely contemptible and baseless. Such an imputation on the character of any distinguished person amounts to his insult, much less a man like 'Umar. In fact the Prophet did not ask for paper to make a testament for nominating 'Ali or anybody else as a Caliph, for it was not at all necessary to make a testament for the purpose. One word, a mere gesture, as he made for Abu Bakr to lead the prayer, was enough for it. Everybody understood what the Prophet wanted of Abu Bakr.

"The Prophet remained alive for three days after asking for paper, but he did not demand it again. Nobody could dare interpose himself between 'Ali and the Prophet. Fātima, the wife of 'Ali was present with the Prophet until he breathed his last. If the Prophet had so wished, he would have sent for 'Ali and nominated him as his successor.

"Apart from the Prophet's reticence, which was not because of any compulsion or pressure, his usual practice was to deny positions of authority to the members of his family and he did not even consider the common rules of inheritance proper for the Apostle of God. Now, if one were to see it in the light of his practice and reticence on this occasion, he would find that nobody interposed himself nor the Prophet ever had any intention of nominating 'Ali as his Caliph."[36]

Al-'Aqqād has also discussed the question of transmission of caliphate through inheritance. He has rightly observed that:

"Had it (inheritance) been one of the commandments of God, then it was queer that the Prophet left this world without any male successor,[37] and the Quran to take its final shape without saying anything about the caliphate being transferred to a member of the Prophet's household. And, had it been the Will of God or a religious necessity, it would have certainly taken effect as a thing determined in advance by fate in our worldly life. Every effort

made against what had been destined would have been in vain in the same way as all the labours made against laws of nature end up in a fiasco.

"Therefore, there is no explicit direction, no circumstantial indication, nor any Providential will to support those who assert transference of caliphate though inheritance and hold it to be confined to Hāshimites."[38]

Oath of Allegiance to Abu Bakr

The Muslims of Medina, both Ansār and Muhājirīn, were sapient and influential and their decision would have been accepted by all in the Arabian Peninsula and outside it. But they stood at the cross-roads when the Prophet bid farewell to the world. They had either to make a concerted effort for spreading the message of Islam, and for it to unanimously elect a leader who was respected by all for his moral virtues. Such a leader had to be very close to the Prophet during his life-time, enjoyed his confidence and also been entrusted with responsibilties on crucial occasions. Alternatively, if Muslims were disunited and lacked unanimity of thought and action, Islam was likely to break up in numerous factions like other religions which had splitted on the issue of leadership.

Actually, the situation was even more complicated because the divisive forces instantly surfaced in Medina, the home-town of Bani-Qahtān whose two tribes, the Aūs and Khazraj, had welcomed the Prophet in their town, provided asylum to the persecuted Muslims and treated them as their brothers with an exemplary magnanimity and self-sacrificing zeal that had been praised by God :

> Those who entered the city and faith before them love those who flee unto them for refuge.[39]

Medina had been the home-town of these people where they had been living for centuries before the emigrants had come to settle there. Therefore, it was not at all astonishing if they considered one of them to be entitled to succeed the Prophet as the leader of the community. Such a claim was rather justified

in the obtaining circumstances and polity of Arabin city states.

'Umar lost no time in grasping the complexity of the situation and the psychological reasons behind it. He visualised through his God-gifted intelligence and foresight, as he had on several occasions earlier, the grave danger that lay ahead. He knew that any delay on the part of those who were responsible for maintaining unity and consensus among Muslims could be disastrous. He, therefore, did not procrastinate in the election of the Caliph. He made haste because certain Ansars of Medina had mooted the question of having the Caliph from their own ranks. They were not entirely unjustified in their proposal since they were the original inhabitants of the city, but their two powerful clans, the Aus and Khazraj, had been at loggerheads for a long time in the recent past.[40] 'Umar also knew that the people of Arabia would be agreeable to accept the leadership of Quraish only because they had held that position in the past. He, therefore, induced the Muslims to pledge fealty to Abu Bakr at Thaqīfa Bani Sā'eda[41] so that no internal dissensions might crop up among the Muslims. It was the time when the Prophet had just died and his burial had yet to take place and unanimity among Muslims was still intact. If a leader of Muslims was elected at the moment, he would naturally superintend the last rites of the Prophet as their leader.

The next day, people swore allegiance to Abu Bakr in the Mosque of the Prophet. Abu Bakr said after praising the Lord; 'Lo : I have been charged with the responsiblity of acting as your chief. I am not the best among you; if I do well, support me; if I make any mistake, counsel me. To tell the truth is faithful allegiance; to conceal it is treason. Those who are weak among you are strong in my sight until I restore their rights to them; and the strong are weak in my sight until I make them restore the rights of others. Of a fact the people who give up striving in the way of God are abased; the people who allow lewdness to flourish among them are made to suffer hardships by Allah. As I obey Allah, obey me; if I neglect Allah and His Apostle, I have no more right to your obedience. Now, come and

perform the prayers. Allah may have mercy on you."[42]

The election of Caliph Abu Bakr was not fortuitous nor it was the result of any collusion that one may claim that there was some secret understanding between certain persons which came to fruition. It had been ordained by God, the Most Wise, since He had decided in His Mercy that Islam shall live and prosper.[43] The election of the first Caliph was also in accordance with the usage of the Arabs who decided all matters of significance through an unfettered discussion and consultation and elected a chieftain who was ripe in age, mature in judgement, sincere and accompalished in leading the people in war and peace. This had been their practice since ages past.[44]

An eminent Muslim penman, Justice Amīr 'Ali,[45] who happened to be a Shia, has described the practice of the Arabs in this regard. He says:

> "Among the Arabs, the chieftaincy of a tribe is not hereditary, but elective; the principle of universal suffrage is recognised in its extremest form, and all the members of a tribe have a voice in the election of their chief. The election is made on the basis of seniority among the surviving male members of the deceased chieftain's family. This old tribal custom was followed in the choice of a successor to the Prophet, for the urgency of the times admitted of no delay. Abu Bakr, who by virture of his age and the position he had held at Mecca occupied a high place in the estimation of the Arabs, was hastily elected to the office of Khalifa (Caliph) or vicegerent of the Prophet. He was recognised as a man of wisdom and moderation, and his election was accepted with their usual devotion to the faith by 'Ali and chief members of Mohammad's family.[46]

The Muslims, specially the Arabs, were really spared of hereditary autocracy by the election of Caliph Abu Bakr. Dynastic form of government is based on ancestral relationship in which race and blood assume undue importance and more often than not a particular person or his family comes to be sanctified

as exalted and holy. Had anyone belonging to Banu Hāshim been elected as the first Caliph, for which they were undoubtedly fully qualified, their religious and spiritual authority would have combined with their temporal ascendancy and Islam would have developed a form of priesthood akin to the clerical system of the Christians. This would have surely given birth to an organised church and priestly order with all the attendant evils of this system in Christianity, Zoroastrianinsm and Brahminism. Religious, spiritual and political leadership in Islam would have combined with an autocratic form of government in which all the powers would have converged in a particular family, allowing it full scope for exploitation of the people. The coming generations would have regarded them as their rulers possessing supernatural powers. Entitled to receive tithes and tributes from their followers, they would have lived a life of ease and pleasure. But this would have been contrary to the spirit and objective of the teachings of the Prophet who had forbidden Banu Hāshim to receive the poor-due. The purpose behind this directive was that the Prophet never wanted his progeny to become bloodsuckers, living on the earnings of others. Abu Huraira relates : 'Once Hasan b. 'Ali had taken a date received by way of charity. As soon as the Prophet saw it he made Hasan vomit it, saying, 'Do you not know that we never take anything of charity ?'[47]

Another lengthy report handed down from 'Abdul Muttalib b. Rabī'a b. al-Hārith contains the words, 'Charity is like dirt of hands of the people which is not permissible to the Prophet and his progeny.'[48]

Prophet's household and the progeny of Hāshim have been spared the ignominy thus described by the Qur'ān :

> O you who believe! surely many of the priests and monks devour the substance of men in falsehood.[49]

Contrarily, the Prophet always used to encourage his near relations to face tribulations and dangers. 'Ali has also referred to this practice of the Prophet in one of his letters to Mu'āwiyah in which he wrote : 'When the fire of battle was hottest and the people seemed losing hope, the Prophet used to ask the members

of his family to go ahead and save others from the enemy's swords and lances. It was thus that 'Ubayda b. Hārith was killed in Badr, Hamza in Uhad and Ja'afar in Mūta.'[50]

And, if the two leaderships, the spiritual and temporal, had been conferred upon Bani Hāshim by way of inheritance, it would have remained with them perpetually. Certain Quraishites had then candidly observed that had Bani Hāshim been made rulers over you, statecraft would have become their exclusive preserve and no other clan of the Quraish would ever have become rulers.[51]

All those who have studied the history of reformatory and revivalist movements would be conversant with the endeavours initiated for a religious renaissance which ended up with the advancement of any particular family, carving out a personal kingdom, or enabling any particular family to attain political influence. That is why those who are endowed with insight and comprehension of religious spirit, are always sceptical of these movements as they are never sure about their ultimate outcome.

It would be relevant to recall here the conversation between Heraclius and Abu Sufiān after the Prophet sent a letter to the former inviting him to Islam. It shows the reaction of Heraclius and what he wanted to know about the Prophet in order to form an estimate of him and his mission. He asked Abu Sufiān: 'Had there been any king in his family?' When Abu Sufiān replied in negative, Heraclius remarked: 'Had it been so. I would have surmised that he was trying to recover his lost kingdom.'[52] It is apparent that God had in His Wisdom already destined that nobody from the Prophet's family or one of the Hashamites should immediately succeed him as his Caliph.[53]

The question asked by Heraclius shows his knowledge of history. He wanted to ascertain if the man claiming prophethood was interested in establishing a hereditary kingdom. But, if a hereditary kingdom had actually come to be established in spite of it through a near relation of the Prophet succeeding him, the verdict of history would have nevertheless been that the prophetic mission of the Apostle of God was meant to vest his descendants

with the mantle of kingship, power and glory rather than for preaching the message of God. It was an affair pre-ordined by God that Abu Bakr of the clan of Bani Taym should be elected as the vicegerent of the holy Prophet. Abu Bakr was succeeded by 'Umar of Bani 'Adi. 'Uthman belonging to Banu Umayyah took over from 'Umar and then 'Ali b. Abi Tālib, the worthiest man in his clan, in fact, among the companions of the Prophet then alive, was chosen to take up the responsibility. The line of succession had by then removed all chances of any misunderstanding that the termporal authority and command belonged to the household of the Prophet. The sequence of succession left no occasion for anyone to make an allegation about graft or jobbery against the Prophet's family.

Steadfastness of Abu Bakr

All the biographers of the Prophet and scholars of Traditions are agreed that the Prophet had said:

> "We prophets do not bequeath anything to anyone; whatever we leave goes to charities."[54]

Ahmad, the compiler of *Musnad*, an authoritative work on Traditions, relates from Abu Huraira that Allah's Apostle said:

> "My descendants shall not apportion *dinar* and *dirham* amongst them. Whatever I shall leave apart from the maintenance of my wives and their agent, shall go to charities."

Bukhāri, Muslim and Abu Dawūd have recorded the above report of Abu Huraira which has been handed down by Mālik b. Anas. Bukāri relates from 'Urwah who heard it from 'Aisha:

> "When the Prophet died and his wives expressed the desire to ask 'Uthmān to approach Abu Bakr for giving them their share of Prophet's inheritance, 'Aisha intervened to say: Did you not listen the Prophet saying that we do not bequeath any property! Whatever we leave goes to charities."

A similar report finds a place in the *Sahīh* of Muslim.

The approach of the Prophet in the matter of inheritance

was not only befitting of a messenger of God but also in keeping with his demeanour. Whenever there was any occasion of danger or it became necessary to bear some loss, the Prophet asked the members of his own household or one belonging to Bani Hāshim to step forward, but where any advantage was to be had, he asked them to fall behind. In the battle of Badr, as stated earlier, he sent forward Hamza, 'Ali and Abu 'Ubayda to face the three veteran warriors of the enemy. A major source of income for the Muslim community, since the time of the Prophet to this day, is *zakāt* or the poor-due, but the Prophet made it unlawful for his own progeny and the descendants of Banu Hāshim to derive any benefit from it. On the occasion of farewell pilgrimage the Prophet abolished interest bearing loans and announced simultaneously: 'The first of our usury I abolish is that of my own uncle 'Abbās b. 'Abdul Muttalib.' On the same occasion he annuled the claims of blood-vengeance and the first claim on blood he proclaimed to have been remitted was that of Ibn Rabī'a b. al-Hārith, b. 'Abdul Muttalib, his own nephew. The proclamation made by him was:

> "The usury of the day of Ignorance is abolished, and the first of our usury I abolish is that of my own uncle, 'Abbās b. 'Abdul Muttalib, and all of it is abolished. And claims of blood-vengeance belonging to the pre-Islamic days have been waived. The first claim on blood I give up is that of Ibn Rabī'a b. Al-Hārith."[53]

Soon after Abu Bakr took over as Caliph, he had to face a difficult problem—a delicate issue for him since it involved a perplexing question of emotional nature. It was a question relating to *Sharī'ah*, but had a political aspect also. It was also a sensitive matter and required to be dealt with in accordance with the pronouncement and practice of his departed master, the Messenger of God.

Bukhāri has narrated this incident on the authority of 'Āisha.

> "Fātima and 'Abbas called upon Abu 'Bakr and demanded the legacy of Allah's Prophet. Both asked for the land

in Fidak[56] as well as the Prophet's share (of booty) in Khaybar. Abu Bakr said to them: I have heard the Prophet saying, "We do not bequeath any property to anyone; whatever we leave is to be deemed as charities." Therefore, I will allow only maintenance to the descendants of the Prophet. According to another report Abu Bakr replied: "I have heard that the prophets do not have legatees but I will meet such of their expenses as were defrayed by the Prophet."[57]

There are other reports also which corroborate the determination of Abu Bakr never to deviate, even slightly, from the practice of the Prophet and follow only what he knew to be the Prophet's will.[58] Fātima, however, continued to insist on her right of inheritance either because she was not aware of the Prophet's will or she considered the Caliph competent to meet her wishes. Be that as it may, both held fast to their views.

Ahmad ibn Hanbal relates Fātima as saying to Abu Bakr: 'You know better what you had heard from the Prophet.'[59]

Fātima remained alive for six months after the death of the Prophet. She held herself aloof from Abu Bakr which shows that her grievance also persisted. Such complaints and misunderstandings are, however, not uncommon among near relations. Often one becomes very touchy about minor matters, particularly if one considers oneself to be right. But the differences between Fātima and Abu Bakr never developed into animosity. Fātima's resentment was marked by a restraint which speaks of her civility and cordiality which were the essential features of her character. 'Āmir narrates that when Fātima became seriously ill, Abu Bakr paid a visit to her and asked for the permission to see her. 'Ali said to Fātima: 'Abu Bakr is standing at the door and wants to come in. If you have no objection allow him to see you.' Fātima asked, 'Would you like me to permit him?' 'Ali replied in affirmative and she gave her consent. Abu Bakr went in and offered his apologies and Fātima was no more displeased with him.[60] We bring the discussion on this issue to an end with the observations of 'Abbās Mahmūd al-'Aqqād who writes in the

Al-'Abqariyāt al-Islāmiyah that : "It is not at all reasonable to doubt the fidelity of Abu Bakr to the Prophet simply because he did not allow Fātima to inherit the legacy of the Prophet. If this was his attitude in the case of Fātima, he had also disallowed inheritance to his own daughter 'Āisha since there could be no legatees to a Prophet under the Islamic law. In fact, Abu Bakr never wanted to refuse inheritance to the legatees of the Prophet, one of whom was his own beloved daughter 'Āisha, but he did not want to deviate from the will of the Prophet and the religious injunctions. To uphold religion was in his view more important than to save any family from the financial loss."[61]

"Abu Bakr had no other choice save what he decided in the matter of Prophet's inheritance. He knew that the prophets do not have legatees as the Prophet had himself told him. When Abu Bakr was about to die, he instructed 'Āisha to forego everything he had given her in favour of the Muslims, although she was entitled to possess them as a legacy and gift from her father.'[62]

Fātima

I cannot proceed further without saying something more about Fātima, the daughter of Allah's Apostle.

Fātima Zahra was the youngest and most beloved child of her father. Waqidi relates on the authority of Abu J'afar al-Baqir that 'Abbās said : 'Fātima was born when K'aba was being reconstructed[63] and the Prophet was thirty-five years of age. Madā'ini also corroborates this statement but another report says that Fātima was born a year and few days before the prophethood of her father. She was married to 'Ali in the beginning of Muharram 2 A. H.[64]

A Shi'ite scholar Shaikh Abu J'afar al-Tūsi has provided incontrovertible evidence that Abu Bakr had taken up the responsibility of purchasing the articles given to Fātima as her dowry.[65] Similarly 'Āisha and Umm Salma had lent assistance to 'Ali in cleaning and preparing his house for the marriage.[66] Fātima was the only daughter of the Prophet who had children and hence

her descendants came to be regarded as the progeny of the Prophet. At the time of her marriage, she was fifteen and a half years of age. Tabrāni narrates from 'Āisha that next to the Prophet she had found Fātima as the most pious. 'Abdur Razzāq relates from Ibn Juraih that Fātima was the youngest daughter of the Prophet as well as dearest to him. Abu 'Umar says that among the daughters of the Prophet, Zaynab was the eldest, Ruqaiya was the next, then Umm Kulthūm and the youngest was Fātima.[67]

'Abdur Rahmān b. Abi Nuaym relates on the authority of Abu Sa'id al-Khudri that the Prophet once said: 'Fātima is the leader of women in Paradise. All the six authentic collections of *hadīth* record the saying of the Prophet who once said in a sermon delivered from the pulpit of the Mosque:

> "Fātima is a part of my body. Whatever annoys her, irks me too. Whoever disturbs her, causes trouble to me also."

'Āisha states : ' Once I saw Fātima coming. The way she was walking exactly resembled that of Allah's Apostle. '

So long as Fātima was alive, Ali did not take any other lady into marriage. 'Uqba b. Yaraym relates from Abu Th'alaba al-Khashni : "Whenever the Prophet returned from a journey or an expedition, he first went to the Mosque where he offered two *raka'ts* of prayer, thereafter he went to see Fātima. After that he met his wives." 'Āisha b. Talha narrates on the authority of 'Āisha who once said: "I have not seen anyone bearing a greater resemblance to the Prophet in speaking than Fātima. '[68]

Fātima was always extremely mindful of the likes and dislikes of the Prophet and considered nothing more important than to win her father's pleasure. On the other hand, many incidents are on record to show the intensity of Prophet's love for his daughter.

'Abdullah b. 'Umar says : 'Whenever the Prophet went out on a journey he had the last word with Fātima and whenever he returned home, he first saw Fātima.'

When the Prophet returned from the expedition of Tabūk

he learnt that Fātima had purchased a 'head-scarf' and dyed it in saffron, hung a curtain on her door and perhaps spread a mat in her house. As the Prophet saw these articles, he returned and sat down in the mosque. Fātima sent for Bilāl and asked him to find out why the Prophet had gone back from her door. Bilāl went to the Prophet and asked him the reason for coming back. The Prophet told him about the things he had seen and then Bilāl communicated it to Fātima who atonce removed the objectionable things. She also changed her dress and put on the old and patched clothings. Then Bilāl again went to the Prophet and informed him of it. The Prophet went to Fātima and said to her : 'My father be your ransom, keep on in this manner.'[69]

Ibn 'Umar relates : 'Once Allah's Apostle went to the house of Fātima but did not enter the house. He returned from the door-steps. Fātima told 'Ali about it, who went to the Prophet and enquired the reason for not going inside his house. The Prophet replied, I have seen a curtain hanging on the door. What have we to do with the world (meaning decoration). 'Ali narrated the reply given by the Prophet to Fātima who said, 'Let me know his wish and I would comply.' 'Ali again went to the Prophet and asked him what he wanted. The Prophet thereupon told him to send the curtain to a certain person who needed it.'[70]

Thaubān, a slave of the Prophet, narrates : 'Whenever the Prophet went away on a journey, the last thing he did was to visit Fātima. Similary, on return he first met Fātima. Once when he returned from an expedition he saw a curtain hanging on the door of Fātima's house. He also saw Hasan and Husain wearing silver bracelets. The Prophet stayed and did not enter the house. Fātima atonce perceived the reason and she got the curtain and the bracelets taken off. The children went weepingly to the Prophet who took the bracelets and said to Taubān, 'Take these to such and such person.' Then pointing towards Hasan and Husain he continued: 'These are the members of my household. I do not want them to enjoy the life of this world. O Thaubān, bring a necklace of date-leaves for Fātima and also

two bracelets of ivory.'[71]

The deep and abiding love of Fātima for the Prophet is believable since he was her father besides being the Apostle of God and the most admired of all the persons. Her utterance after the death of the Prophet wās more mournful than a long elegy. After the burial of the Prophet was over, she said, "O Anas ! how did thy throw dust on the Prophet ?"[72]

Fātima died six months after the Prophet had breathed his last. The Prophet had assured her that she would be the first to meet him after leaving this fleeting world. He had also once told her : 'Are you not pleased that you will be the head of all the women in paradise ? '[73]

Imām Mālik reports from J'afar Sādiq (who heard it from Zainul Ābidīn) that Fātima died in the evening between *maghrib* and *'ishā* prayers. Abu Bakr, 'Umar, Zubayr and 'Abdur Rahmān b. 'Auf came to 'Ali on hearing the news. 'Ali asked Abu Bakr to lead the funeral prayers. Abu Bakr objected to lead the prayers in his presence, but Ali insisted and he yielded to his desire. She was buried in the same night.[74] Ibn S'ad confirms this report in the *Tabaqāt*. He says that Mutrif b. 'Abdullāh al-Yasāri told him on the authority of Abdul 'Alā and Ibrāhim that Abu Bakr led the funeral prayer of Fātima with four *takbīrs*.[75]

'Abdur Razzāq cites Ibn Juraih who said : 'Fātima was the youngest daughter of the Prophet and also dearest to him.' Abu 'Umar says that the four daughters of the Prophet were Zaynab, Ruqaiya, Umm Kulthūm and Fātima.[76] As Wāqidi reports she died on the 3rd of Ramadhan, 11 A. H /22 November, 633 A. D. and she was buried the same night. She gave birth to Hasan, Husain, Muhsin, Umm Kulthūm and Zaynab[77]. May God be pleased with her.

'Ali's Oath of Allegiance to Abu Bakr

Reports differ about the timing of 'Ali's oath of allegiance to Abu Bakr. Hāfiz Abu Bakr al-Baihaqi relates on the authority of Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri : 'Abu Bakr ascended the pulpit and cast a glance on the people. He did not find 'Ali among

them. So he sent for 'Ali and said, 'O brother and son-in-law of the Prophet, would you like that the unity among Muslims should be torn to pieces ?' 'Ali replied, 'I have no grudge or complaint, O Caliph of the Prophet.' He immediately swore allegiance to him. Al-Baihaqi adds that 'Ali uttered these words or this was their purport.[78]

Ibn Kathīr adds : 'A significant aspect of this affair is that 'Ali took the oath of allegiance on the very first day or the day following the death of the Prophet. This is correct in point of fact since 'Ali never gave up Abu Bakr's companionship nor he absented himself in any congregational prayer.'[79]

It is commonly believed that 'Ali did not initially take the oath of fealty to Abu Bakr in deference to the wishes and sentiments of Fātima. He took the oath publicly six months later when Fātima had died. Ibn Kathīr and other historians are of the view that the subsequent oath of allegiance by 'Ali was in confirmation of the first one. A number of reports to this effect are on record in the six authentic compilations of the Traditions and other books.[80]

Perseverance of 'Ali

'Ali had to face a very difficult and delicate situation in the very beginning of the caliphate of Abu Bakr. His reaction on the occasion makes it abundantly clear that as a sincere and straightforward votary of Islam he was free from all clanish and political bias. Ibn 'Asākir relates on the authority of Suwayd b Ghafla : 'Abu Sufyān came to 'Ali and 'Abbās, and said, 'O 'Ali, O 'Abbās, how is it that the caliphate has been entrusted to a clan of Quraish lower in prestige and fewer in numbers. By God, if both of you agree I would pack into Medina my supporters and allies.' 'Ali replied, 'By God, I cannot allow you to do so Had we not considered Abu Bakr worthy of being Caliph, we would have never allowed him to take over. O Abu Sufyān, the essence of faith in sincerity and truthfulness. Believers are well-wishers of one another, they love one another irrespective of the distance between them.'[81]

Ibn Abi Hadīd writes in his commentary of *Nahjul-Balāghah:*

"Abu Sufyān requested 'Ali to allow him to swear allegiance to him but 'Ali replied, 'You want something of me which is not my concern. Allah's Apostle had bid me something and I am firmly abiding by it.' Then Abu Sufyān went to 'Abbās and said, 'O Abul Fadl, you deserve more to succeed your nephew. Give me your hand so that I am take oath of fealty to you. Once I do so, nobody would dare object to it.' Smilingly 'Abbās replied, 'Should I covet a thing that has already been rejected by 'Ali?' Abu Sufyān returned downhearted."[82]

Another report relating to the affair reads :

Fadl[83] b. 'Abbās once said, 'O Bani Tamīm you have come into possession of the vicegerency of the Prophet (although he belonged to our family). We have a greater right to it than you.' The sons of Abu Lahab even composed a few verses in this connexion. Zubair says that when 'Ali heard this prattle, he sent for them and asked them to desist from it. He also said, 'Conservation of the faith is dearer to us than anything else.'[84]

Close Relationship between 'Ali and Abu Bakr

True to his family traditions, high-minded and of guileless character, 'Ali always remained an ardent supporter of Abu Bakr. He was Abu Bakr's most trusted counsellor and well-wisher; always advised what he considered to be in the interest of Islam and Muslim community. He never withheld his cooperation and did all he could to strengthen the caliphate of Abu Bakr. There are several instances which demonstrate that 'Ali always endeavoured to maintain unity among the Muslims and make the caliphate of Abu Bakr succeed. One such incident relates to the decision of Abu Bakr to lead the Muslim forces against the apostates. He had even made necessary preparations to go to the theatre of war at Dhul Qassa. It was a decision fraught with danger which might have proved disastrous for Islam itself. Narrating the incident Ibn Kathīr writes : 'Dār Qutni relates from Sa'eed b. al-Musayyab who heard it from

Ibn 'Umar that when Abu Bakr made up his mind to leave for Dhul Qassa and got seated on his camel, 'Ali took hold of the camel's halter and said, 'Where are you going, O Caliph of the Apostle of God ? I repeat what the Prophet had said on the occasion of battle of Uhad. Sheathe your sword and depart not from us for ever; if you suffer any loss, Islam will crumble to pieces for ever.' Abu Bakr thereupon returned to Medina. This report has also been handed down by Zakariya al-Sāji and Zuhri on the authority of 'Āisha.'[85]

Had 'Ali any grudge against Abu Bakr or his election as the Caliph, the incident offered him a golden opportunity to take advantage of the situation. Had he not dissuaded Abu Bakr, it is possible that the latter might have been killed in the battle and he would have had his way cleared in a natural way. Or, God forbid, if he bore any ill-will against Abu Bakr, he could have easily asked someone to get rid of him in the heat of battle or through any other device. Such ploys are not uncommon among profane politicians.

At this crucial hour when the future of Islam was in danger all the companions of the Prophet, and particularly 'Ali, cooperated whole-heartedly with Abu Bakr and acted in unison, shared the joys and sorrows of one another and behaved in a way as if they were all members of the same family. Anyone who goes through the history of the times would be convinced of it.

We cite here only one example. Muhammad Bāqir b. Zainul Ābidīn relates :

> "Abu Bakr had once pain in his stomach. 'Ali warmed his hands by fire and applied them to Abu Bakr's stomach."[86]

Shaikh Abu J'afar al-Tūsi writes in the Al-Umāli that Abu Bakr assisted the Prophet in arranging the articles of dowry and marriage of Fātima with 'Ali[87] 'Āisha and Umm Salma, on the other hand, helped 'Ali in making preparations for the marriage,[88]

These were the godly persons with purer souls who

answered the description of the Qur'ān.

> Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; and those who are with him are hard against unbelievers, (but) compassionate amongst themselves.[89]

Abu Bakr's deep Regard for Prophet's Family

Abu Bakr had a deep regard for the Prophet's family and was very affectionate to Hasan and Husain. Bukhāri reports from 'Uqba b. al-Hārith : "One day Abu Bakr came out of the mosque after *'asr* prayers. Strolling outside he found Hasan playing with other children. He raised Hasan on his shoulder and said, 'My father be his ransom. He resembles the Apostle of God and not 'Ali.' 'Ali laughed at the remark."[90]

The deep regard Abu Bakr had for 'Ali was not one-sided. It was reciprocated by 'Ali who gave the name of Abu Bakr to one of his sons.[91] 'Ali adopted Muhammad, the son of Abu Bakr and brought him up as his ward.[92] 'Ali even appointed him as the governor of a region although he was criticised by some for it.

Abu Bakr as the Caliph

Before we conclude this discussion and cite the opinion of 'Ali about Abu Bakr, it seems proper to make a mention of the simple, honest ways of the first successor to the Prophet who always tried meticulously to emulate his late master.

Phillip K. Hitti writes in the *History of the Arabs* :

> "Abu Bakr (632-4) the conqueror and pacifier of Arabia, lived in patriarchal simplicity. In the first six months of his short reign he travelled back and forth from al-Sunh (where he lived in a modest household with his wife, Habībah) to his capital of al-Medinah, and received no stipend since the State had at that time hardly any income. All state business he transacted in the courtyard of Prophet's mosque."[93]

Another European writer impressed by the sterling qualities

of Abu Bakr writes :

> "At his court, Abu Bakr maintained the same simple and frugal life as Muhammad. Guards and servants there were none, nor anything approaching the pomp and circumstance of state. He was diligent in business...... Abu Bakr never spared himself and many incidents are related of the manner in which he descended to the minutest things. Thus, he would sally forth by night to seek for any destitute or oppressed person.......In the choice of his agents for high office or command, he was absolutely free from nepotism or partiality, and was wise and discerning in his estimate of character."[94]

Collection of the Qur'ān

Collection of the Qur'ān was one of the great achievements of Abu Bakr. If Abu Bakr safeguarded Islam and its pristine purity by fighting the apostates to the finish, his collection of the Qur'ān was equally momentous since it has preserved the Divine Writ in its original shape for all times to come. The immediate cause for taking this step was the martyrdom of a large number of those who had committed the Qur'ān to their memory in the war against apostates, and there was the danger of the remaining being killed in the encounters against the Iranian and Byzantine Empires.[95] Thus, the Qur'ān was collected and reduced to writing in the shape we have it today.

We close this chapter with the speech delivered by 'Ali on the occasion of Abu Bakr's death.

> "When 'Ali learnt of Abu Bakr's death he uttered the Quranic verse : 'We are from Allah and to Him shall we return.' He left hastily for the place where Abu Bakr was, with tears rolling down his cheeks, and said when he reached there.
>
> "Allah may bless you, O Abu Bakr. By God, you were the first to embrace Islam and your faith was most perfect, your conviction most staunch. You had the greatest awe of God and reposed complete trust in Allah's

Apostle. In character and morals and sublime deportment of the Prophet you resembled him most and he regarded you as the most trustworthy and honourable. Allah may reward you with a goodly return on behalf of Islam. You declared the Prophet as truthful when others had rejected him, and, for that reason Allah designated you as truthful by saying. "*And whoso bringeth the truth and he who confims it—such are the dutiful.*"[96] You shared the sorrows of the Prophet when others had abandoned him; you stood by him when others withdrew from him; you put up with trials and tribulations when others deserted him. You were verily 'second of the two,' a constant companion, an escort during the journey of migration, one who cheered and comforted the Prophet and the most worthy to deputise for him among his followers. You remained firm when others had lost the heart, and you emerged successful when others had failed. You went ahead with courage and determination when others had slackened. You normally kept quiet but your advice was the most sound; you were the most stout-hearted and noblest in your deeds. It was about you that the Prophet had said : 'Weak in physique but strong in fulfilling obligations to God, humble in demeanour but honourable in the sight of God and winsome both in the earth and heaven.' May Allah bless you with the choicest rewards on our behalf and for the sake of Islam."[97]

Notes and References :

1. Luding Blan, Prof. of Jewish Theological Seminary. Budapest, Hungary in the article on 'Worship' in *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. XII, pp. 568-69.
2. L. S. S. O'Malley *Popular Hinduism—The Religion of the Masses*, Cambridge (1935), pp. 6-7; R. C. Dutt, *Ancient India*, Vol. III, p. 276.
3. C. V. Vaidya, *History of Hindu India*, Vol. I, Poona (1924), p. 101.
4. S. Vernon McCasland and others, *Religions of the World*, New York, 1969, p. 139.

5. Q. 33 : 62.
6. Ibn Kathir, *Al-Bidāyah wan Nihāyah*, Vol. I-VI; Ibn Hajar, *Al-Isābah fi-Tamīz is-Sahābah* and other biographies of Abu Bakr.
7. The author of the *Minhaj al-Kirārmah*, Ibn al-Muttahir al-Hilli has expressed the view: "There was nothing distinguishable in Abu Bakr accompanying the Prophet in the cave since the Prophet might have kept with him for the fear of his leaking out the secret." It has been reported that the book was written for the Chieftain Aulija Khuda Banda Khān. When the author read out this passage to the Chief he remarked, "No prudent man can be expected to do so."
8. Q. 9 : 40.
9. *Sahīh Bukhāri*; *Muslim.*
10. *The life of the Muhammad*, *op. cit.*, pp. 680-81. The Prophet meant that perhaps she was afraid that Abu Bakr's acting as *Imām* might be taken by the people as an ill omen, in case he died, but she was opposing the suggestion under the pretext of Abu Bakr's tender-heartedness Also *Al-Sirah Ibn Hishām*, Vol. II, pp 543-46.
11. *Seerat Ibn Kathīr*, Vol. IV, p. 479.
12. Q. 3 : 144
13. *The life of Muhammad*, *op. cit.* pp. 682-83; *Al-Sirah Ibn Hishām*, Vol. II, pp. 655-56; *Sahīh Bukhāri.*
14. The incident has been extensively dealt with in the author's '*Four Pillars of Islam*'; Khattābi's *Ma'ālim al-Sunan* can also be consulted.
15. The unruly spirit of the nomads had broken forth so extensively that Islam had almost been confined to the city of Medina and it appeared impossible to face the menace. 'Umar had then advised Abu Bakr to adopt a conciliatory policy saying, 'O Caliph of the Prophet, placate the people and be kind to them.' Abu Bakr replied, 'You were unyielding in paganism, have you become hesitant in Islam?' (on the authority of Razīn.)
16. Abu Bakr meant that he would not allow the slightest deviation from the practice followed during the life-time of the Prophet. The word used in one version means 'a halter put round the neck of a goat or camel,' while in another version it is 'a kid.' *Al-Bidāyah wan Nihāyah*, *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 311.
17. *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah*, *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 304. These were the Bedouins who had accepted Islam but being far away from Medina they never had an opportunity of imbibing the spirit of Islam. The strict rules of morality and discipline enforced by Islam were found irksome by unruly tribes who still cherished the headstrong traditions of the pagan past. The tribal pride of Rabī'a and Mudar, 'Adnān and Qahtān had not yet allowed them to reconcile their differences under

a unified state and their partisan spirit and family feuds were still extant. These were the Bedouins about whom the Quran says : 'The desert Arabs say: we have believed, but (rather) say : we submit, while faith has not entered into your hearts'. (49 : 14). At another place it had advised Muslims : 'So choose not friends from them till they forsake their homes in the way of Allah. (4 : 89).'

18. Q. 49 : 9
19. *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 364.
20. *Ibid*, p. 319.
21. *Ibid*, p. 329.
22. *Ibid*, p. 332.
23. *Ibid.*, Vol. V., p. 279.
24. *Ibid.*, Vol. VII, pp. 2-3.
25. Ibn Athir, *Al-Kāmil fi Tārikh, op. cit.*, Vol. V., p. 423.
26. Suyuti, Jalāl-ud-din, *Tārīkh al-Khulfa'*, Matba Maimna, Misr, 1305 A. H., p. 78.
27. Q. 9 : 34.
28. Bustāni, Patrus, *Dā'iratul Ma'ārif*, (Beirut, 1876), Vol. IV, p. 146.
29. A. Christansen has given a detailed account of the moral and religious condition of Iran in *L' Iran sous les Sassanides*, Paris, 1936.
30. For details see *Manu Shastra*, Chep. 1, 2, 8 and 11.
31. Q. 5 : 67.
32. Q. 33 : 38-39.
33. Bukhāri, *Al-Jāmi al-Sahīh*, Chap : Illness and death of the Prophet.
34. Baihaqi and Ahmad.
35. Bukhāri, *Al-Jāmi al-Sahīh*, Chap. Illness and Death of the Prophet. Also see *Muwatta* of Mālik and *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 471.
36. 'Abbās Mahmūd al-'Aqqād, *Al-'Abqaryāt al-Islāmiyah*, Cairo, n. d., p. 619.
37. One of the sons of the Prophet was Qāsim after whom the Prophet has been called as Abul Qāsim. He died in infancy. 'Abdullāh, Tayyab and Tāhir were born after him. Ibn Qayyim holds that these are the aliases of 'Abdullāh. However, these sons were born to Khadīja. Ibrāhim was born to Maria, the Copt, who also died in infancy. Had Allah willed to keep the caliphate confined to the progeny of the Prophet, one of the Prophet's son would have remained alive.
38. *Al-'Abqariyāt al-Islāmiyah, op. cit.*, p. 936.
39. Q. 59 : 9.
40. It was a real danger. Abu Bakr had hinted about it when he said : "If the responsiblity of caliphate is entrusted to Aus, Khazraj will object to it and if Khazraj are given the charge, Aus will demur. All

the Arabian tribes will not agree to the leadership of any one except to a man of the clans of Quraish. Let us take the reins in our hands and you should become our counsellors. Do not hesitate in advising us and we shall not take any major decision without consulting you."

41. The reports on the subject show that the Ansār had already assembled at Bani Sā'eda (as certain hypocrites had already planned). A chief of one of the two tribes was likely to be elected, leaving the Muhājirīn high and dry. This would have created a dissension among the Muslims, but 'Umar arrived at the place with Abu Bakr and saved the situation before it could take an ugly turn.
42. *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 248.
43. The Qurān had already declared : 'He it is who hath sent His messenger with guidance and the religion of truth, that He may make it conqueror of all religion however much idolaters may be averse.' (61 : 9).
44. Al-'Aqqād says that 'when the Prophet died 'Ali was a little more than 30 years of age. It was, therefore, unusual to elect him as a Caliph since the Arabs gave undue importance to seniority. (*Al-Abqariyāt*, p. 241). Other reports say that 'Ali was then 33 and Abu Bakr 61 years of age.
45. Syed Amīr 'Ali (1849-1928) belonged to a Shi'ite family whose forefathers came to India from Iran with Nādir Shāh. He was an eminent lawyer who wrote a monumental work on Mohammedan Law. Apart from being a celebrated writer, he served as the Chief Justice of the Bengal High Court in 1904 and was the first Indian to be appointed to the Privy Council. His two works viz. *Spirit of Islam* and *A Short History of the Saracenes* attained fame for him.
46. Amīr 'Ali, *A Short History of the Saracenes*. London, 1955, p. 21; Ibn Abi al-Hadīd, the commentator of *Nahjul-Balāghah* (d. 665 A.H.) a Mutazali Shia, writes that our earlier scholars of Baghdād and Basra are agreed that the oath of allegiance to Abu Bakr was flawless according to the law and Sharī'ah since he was chosen by election and there was a consensus on it. (*Sharh Nahjul Balaghah, op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 7).
47. *Sahīh Bukhāri, Kitāb-al-Zakāt* and *Sahīh Muslim.*
48. *Sahīh Muslim, Kitāb al-Zakāt.*
49. Q. 9 : 34.
50. *Nahjul Balāghah* (Eng. tr. 'Askari J'afri, *Peak of Eloquence*, Bombay, 1979, letter no. 9, p. 434.)
51. *Al-'Abqariyāt al-Islāmiyah, op. cit.*, p. 938.
52. *Sahīh Bukhāri.*
53. Hasan b. 'Ali was aware of its implication for he had once remarked, "By God, I am not sure if God would give us both, the prophethood and the caliphate." (Al-Zahabi, Shams-ud-din Muhammad b. Ahmad,

Siyar Aylām al-Nablā', Beirut, 1981, Vol. III, p. 278)

54. *Musnad Ibn Hanbal*, Vol. II, p. 463; *Fath al-Bāri*, *op. cit.*, Vol XII, p.8.
55. *Sahīh Muslim*, *Sunan Abu Dawūd*, on the authority of Jābir b. 'Abdullāh.
56. Fidak is a village in Hijaz at a distance of two to three days journey from Medina. It has a grove of dates and a spring of water. Allah apportioned it to the Prophet after its people sued for peace.
57. *Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal*, Vol. I, p. 10. It is also significant that after 'Ali assumed Caliphate, he neither took his own share nor apportioned the shares of other claimants to the Prophet's legacy.
58. *Sahīh Bukhāri*, Chap. Expedition to Khaybar. These reports also show that during the period Abu Bakr remained Caliph, he regularly paid the income from the fief of the Prophet in Fidak and Medina as well as their share from the property in Khaybar to the members of Prophet's family, although he never transferred the ownership of these properties to them in deference to the wishes of the Prophet. The great Shia scholar Ibn Abi al-Hadīd, author of *Sharh Nahjul-Balāghah* has narrated from Mohammad Baqir that no injustice was done to his forefathers in this matter. He also narrates a similar report from Zayed the martyr (*Sharh Nahj al-Balāghah*, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 113).
59. *Musnad Ahmad*, Vol. I, p. 4. There might have been difference of opinion, as some reports suggest, about the inheritance of immoveable property left by the Prophet between Abu Bakr and Fātima.
60. Tabri, Muhib-ud-din, *Al-Riyādh al-Nadharata fi Manāqib al-'Asharata*, Beirut, 1984. Ibn S'ad also has a report to the same effect in the *Tabaqāt*. Ibn S'ad also adds that Abu Bakr led the funeral prayer of Fātima. (*Tabaqāt*, Beirut, Vol. VIII, p. 19).
61. 'Abbās Mahmūd al-'Aqqād, '*Al-Abqariyāt al-Islāmiyah*, *op. cit.*, p. 446.
62. *Ibid*, p. 448.
63. The walls of the Kaba had been demolished because of a flood about a year or so before the Prophet started receiving revelations. The black stone installed at its place by the Prophet averted bloodshed among the Quraish. The incident finds a place in the biography of the Prophet.
64. As already stated in Chapter II, this report appears to be correct because Hasan was born in 3 A. H. Shāh Waliullah also holds this view to be correct.
65. Tūsi, Abi J'afar, *Kitāb al-Umāli*, Najaf Ashraf, Vol. I, p. 39.
66. *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, Kitab al-Nikāh.
67. Suyūti, Jalāl-ud-din, *al-Musnad Fātima Zahra*.
68. Ibn Abd al-Barr Qurtabi, *Al-Isti'ab fi M'arafata al-Ashāb*, Vol. IV, p. 374-377.
69. Hammād b. Is'hāq b. Ismā'il (199-267), *Kitāb Tarakata al-Nabi (SAW) was-Subal al-Lati Wajhahu fih*, Medina, 1404 A. H., p. 56.

70. *Ibid*, p. 57.
71. *Ibid*, p. 57-58; *Sunan Abu Dawūd*; *Musnad Ahmad b. Hanbal.*
72. *Sahīh Bukhāri.*
73. *Al-Bidāyah wan Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 332.
74. *Tabaqāt al-Kubra, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, p. 29.
75. *Ibid*, Vol. VIII, p. 29.
76. Suyuti, *Musnad Fatima Zahra.*
77. *Al-Bidāyad wan Nihāyah op. cit.*, Vol, V, p. 292.
78. *Ibid., op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 249.
79. *Ibid*, Vol. V, p. 249.
80. *Ibid*, Vol. V, p. 246.
81. *Kanz al-Ummāl, op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 141.
82. *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah, op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 18.
83. Son of 'Abbās, on whose name 'Abbās was called Abul Fadl.
84. Ibn Abi al-Hadīd, *Sharh Nahjul-Balāgha, op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 21.
85. *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VI, pp. 314-15.
86. Tabari, *Al-Riyādh al-Nadharat*, Vol. I and Suyūti, *Durr-i-Manshoor*, Vol. IV, p. 101.
87. Abi J'afar al-Tūsi, *Kitāb al-Umāli*, Najaf, Vol. I, p. 29.
88. Shaikh Mohammad Nāf'e, *Ruhmā Bain-hum.*
89. Q. 48 : 29.
90. *Sahīh Bukhāti.*
91. *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 332.
92. Husain Dayārbakri, *Tārīkh al-Khamīs*, Matba Uthman Abdur Razzak, 1302 A. H., Vol. II., p. 26.
93. Phillip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, London (1953), pp. 175-76.
94. Sir William Muir, *Annals of the Early Caliphate*, London (1882), p. 123.
95. In the battle against Yamāmah seventy or, according to some reports, even more of those who had memorised the Qur'ān were killed. There was danger of still more of them being killed in the prolonged wars against Iran and Byzantium. Abu Bakr was extremely perturbed but he had qualms about doing anything not undertaken by the Prophet. Utimately he was satisfied of the need of collecting the Qur'ān.
96. Q. XXXIX : 33.
97. Muhammad b. Abi Bakr b. 'Abdullah b. Mūsa al-Tilmisāni *Al-Jauharata fi Nasb al-Nabi wa-Ashab al-'Asharāta*, Riyadh, 1983, Vol. II, p. 126. Al-Muhib al-Tabri has given a very lengthy speech of 'Ali in the *Al-Riyādh al-Nadharata*, delivered on the occasion of Abu Bakr's death. As it is doubtful that such a lengthy speech could have been narrated accurately later on, we have given preference to the shorter speech given by Al-Tilmisāni.

IV

'ALI DURING THE REIGN OF CALIPH 'UMAR

Nomination of 'Umar as Caliph

'Umar was nominated as Caliph after the death of Abu Bakr.[1] Abu Bakr had nominated him as his vicegerent because of his sound judgement, foresight and firm determination—the qualities required for the head of a developing society and state. Islam was then emerging as a world power. Rapid conquests were, for the first time in history, bringing vast and extensive countries under the control of the Arabs. It was a crucial time when new and intricate problems required to be solved quickly and successfully. Byzantium and Iran, the two great empires of the day, were on the verge of being overpowered; all that wealth and labour could produce for the enjoyment of life was finding its way in abundance to Arabia where the people had been used to lead a nomadic or semi-nomadic life in leather tents or earthen houses. Let alone the appliances of comfort, they were not even aware of things of daily use in the cultured parts of the world. When the Arabs saw camphor for the first time in Iraq, they took it to be some kind of salt and someone even used it for kneading the dough.[2]

The Muslim Arab conquerors were faced with a new and complicated situation. They had, on the one hand, to preserve

their austere way of life, Islamic values and martial qualities strictly in accordance with the ideal society of the days of the Prophet and his companions and, on the other, assume the leadership of the cultured countries and nations, far ahead of them culturally and intellectually, and administer them efficiently.

The nomination of 'Umar to take over as the Caliph in such an unsettled and puzzling situation wherein he had to preserve the integrity of Islam and demonstrate its moral superiority over the so-called cultured yet debased social orders prevalent all over the world, seems to have been divinely inspired. He was fully competent to undertake this onerous task. Absolutely sincere and firm as he was, he succeeded eminently in keeping up the Prophet's message and mission.

'Umar was respected as well as feared by all. The awe he inspired through his stern yet just leadership was such that he deposed the Muslim General Khālid b. al-Walīd—titled as the Sword of Allah by the Prophet—when his exploits in warfare had earned him the name of an invincible commander and the Muslims were facing a mammoth army of the Byzantines at Yarmūk. 'Umar deposed Khālid b. al-Walīd and placed him under Abu 'Ubayda, the new Commander-in-Chief. A critical situation was created; pride and self-interest could have played havoc at that time. But 'Umar commanded such an awe and Khālid was so perfect in faith that the latter on receiving the orders of demotion spontaneously exclaimed: 'I have listened and obeyed the leader of the Muslims.'[3] When somebody said to Khālid b. al-Walīd that the change at this decisive hour might prove to be perilous, he replied: 'So long as 'Umar lives there is no danger of any insurgency.'[4]

Khālid b. al-Walīd was then the most popular Muslim General who had never suffered any defeat. His compliance with the Caliph's order and acquiescence to serve as an ordinary soldier was unprecedented in history. At the same time, the incident also speaks volumes of the awe of Caliph, 'Umar and his firm hold over the affairs of the state and Muslim army.

The affair of the governor of Egypt 'Amr b. al-'Aas is of

historic significance. His son Muhammad and a Egyptian copt had a horse race competition. The copt won the race but Muhammad b. 'Amr b. al-'Aas insisted on oath that his horse had left his competitor's horse behind. The copt also sweared that he had won the race which made Muhammad b. 'Amr lose his temper. Filled with anger he whipped the copt saying, 'Take it. I am the grandee's son.' The copt complained to 'Umar who sent for 'Amr b. al-'Aas and his son. When they arrived, 'Umar gave a whip to the copt to beat 'Amr's son. He also said to 'Amr b. al-'Aas, 'Whence have you made slaves of those born free of their mothers.'[5]

Simple living of the Arabs

The nation of Islam was then passing through a period of transition which was as crucial for it as it always is for other developing notions. Arabs had just crossed he threshold of their nomadic existence and came across the sophistications of cultured and urban societies in other countries. They had been accustomed to live in the tents tending their sheeps and camels and living by their milk and meat . In the countries they conquerred they found devices of ease and comfort, of flourish and pageantry. To live in moderation at this juncture was quite a task, difficult and delicate.

But this feat was accompalished by 'Umar. No change took place in his personal life: the same austere and simple way of life he retained as he was accustomed to lead before assuming the charge of caliphate. At the same time, he remained so studiously watchful that the Arabs did not adopt the urbane alien culture. Wealth was pouring in from all sides with the expanding conquests, but, he strictly watched that it was not spent on luxuries. Ibn Kathīr reports in the *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah* that: 'When 'Umar went to Jerusalem he found the Prophet's companions clad in loose over-garments made of a kind of coarse satin. 'Umar could not bear that sight and he asked them to put off those garments. He permitted them to wear those robes when they pleaded that they were in a state of war which

required them to wear those robes for keeping their arms in readiness.'[6]

Tāriq b. Shihāb relates: 'When 'Umar was going to Syria he found a rivulet in his way. He got down from his camel, took off the socks and crossed it on foot with his camel. The people there were amazed (that he did not take the assistance of any servant). Thereupon Abu 'Ubayda remarked: 'You have shown yourself to be too simple to these men.' 'Umar stroke Abu 'Ubayda's chest and replied, 'O Abu 'Ubayda, would that somebody else had made this remark. Abu 'Ubayda, you are the people who were treated as lowly, humble and insignificant by others. Islam conferred honour on you and if you want it now through anything else other than Islam, Allah will debase you again.'[7]

'Umar once sent a directive to his governors posted outside Arabia. He wrote: 'Do not take to the comforts and dresses of non-Arabs, nor give up the habit of working in the sun, for it is the bath of the Arabs. Carry on with your austere and frugal way of life, keep yourself accustomed to rough and wooden beds and wear coarse and worn-out clothes. Do not be unmindful of keeping your lances, ride your horses by jumping on them and continue to practise archery.'[8]

Another utterance attributed to 'Umar demonstrates his keen sense of moral values and firm determination to maintain them at all costs. He is reported to have said:

> "Islam is now forging ahead. The Quraishites want to treat the wealth bestowed by God as subsidy to them and become indifferent to His worshipful obligations. But they should know that so long as 'Umr is alive, he will keep standing at the cross-roads; he will safeguard them by holding their necks and legs lest they fall in the fire."

Having an insight into human psychology he knew what makes one tick. He, therefore, did not allow eminent companions of the Prophet to leave Medina. He even told them that he was afraid of their dispersal in different countries. He knew

that the least complacency in this matter would give rise to complications in the newly conquered regions. People will start gathering around those influential people which will result in new groupings and confederacies coming into existence. All this, he had thought, would ultimately lead to friction and anarchy.

A well-known writer and lawyer Syed Ameer 'Ali, who happened to be a Shi'ite, writes about 'Umar :

> "The short government of Abu Bakr was so fully occupied with the labour of pacifying the desert tribes to afford time for any systematic regulation of the provinces. But wlth the reign of Omar—a truly great man—commenced that sleepless care for the welfare of the subject nations which characterised the early Muslim governments."[9]

At another place he says :

> "Omar's accession to the Caliphate was of immense value to Islam. He was a man of strong moral fibre and a keen sense of justice, possessed of great energy and force of character."[10]

> "Stern but just, far-sighted thoroughly versed in the character of his people, he was especially fitted for the leadership of unruly Arabs. He held the helm with a strong hand, and severely repressed the natural tendency to demoralisation among nomadic tribes and semi-cultivated people when coming in contact with luxury and vices of the cities......of simple habits, austere and frugal, wandering about at night to inquire into the condition of the people without any guard or court—such was the greatest and most powerful ruler of the time."[11]

Sir William Muir has thus partrayed the achievements of 'Umar :

> "So died 'Umar, next to the Prophet the greatest in the kingdom of Islam; for it was all within these ten years, that by his wisdom, patience and vigour, the dominion

> was achieved over Syria, Egypt, and Persia, which Islam has ever since maintained......Yet throughout his marvellous fortune he never lost the equipose of a wise and sobar judgement, nor exalted himself above the frugal and familiar style of the Arab Chief. 'Where is the Caliph ?' would the visitor from distant provinces inquire, as he looked around the court of the Great Mosque; and all the while the monarch sat in homely guise before him."[12]

Expansion of the Islamic Realm under 'Umar

It is not possible, even briefly, to recapitulate the extensive conquests made during the reign of Caliph 'Umar. The two great empires which had amongst themselves divided the then civilized world and whose political, cultural and social systems had set the norms for others, were not only vanquished in the field of battle but their possessions were also administered more efficiently and converted into blooming regions. Unruly lands were subjected to law and order and new urban centres were brought into being. These are the matters which have been dealt with in greater detail in the annals of Islam and biographical works on Caliph 'Umar.[13]

'Ali and Caliph 'Umar

It would, however, be worthwhile to refer to comradely rapport between 'Ali and 'Umar and the affectionate regard they had for one another. To what extent one placed confidence in the other, how they co-operated in matters of virtue and goodness and how they conducted the affairs of the state through mutual consultation are adequately illustrated by the incidents narrated here.

Naf'e al-'Aythi relates: 'Once I entered the enclosure where the camels received by way of charity were kept, along with 'Umar b. Al-Khattāb and 'Ali b. Abi Tālib. 'Uthmān was sitting in the shade writing what 'Ali was dictating to him, standing in front of him, in accordance with the instructions of 'Umar.

'Umar was in the sun clad in two wrappings and the summar was extremely hot. He had covered his body with one and his head with the other, counting the camels received by way of charity and giving out their colour and the number of teeth each had (to assess their age). 'Ali then said to 'Uthmān, "For the best (man) that thou canst hire is the strong, the trustworthy," says a Quranic verse and here (pointing towards 'Umar) is the strong, the trustworthy."[14]

'Ali acted as the most amiable and trustworthy adviser to 'Umar. He solved intricate problems in a satisfactory manner that left no doubt about the accuracy of his advice. 'Umar is reported to have once remarked, "Umar would have been nowhere if 'Ali had not been with him."[15] In fact, 'Ali's wisdom became so proverbial that a number of later writers refer to the then popular adage : A complicated problem but no Abul Hasan ! Even the Prophet had recognised this quality of 'Ali for he is reported to have said : 'Ali is the most competent to solve enigmatic problems.

When 'Umar set out for Jerusalem he appointed 'Ali to deputize for him.

'Ali had given his daughter Umm Kulthūm in marriage to 'Umar. This shows their cordial relations and the regard 'Ali had for 'Umar.[16]

Sincerity of 'Ali

How earnest and sincere was 'Ali to the cause of Islam and Muslims and to what extent was he a candid well-wisher of 'Umar is revealed by his advice tendered on the occasion of the battle of Nehāwand.[17] The judicious opinion expressed by 'Ali on that occasion is enough to show his wholeheartedness.

The enemy was facing the Muslim army at Nehāwand. After the Arabs had defeated the Persian General Al-'Ula and captured Al-Ahwāz, the Persians established contact with their Emperor Yazdjard who was then in Marv. All the provincial governors from Al-Bāb to Sind and the rulers of Khurāsān and Halwān responded with alacrity to the call of their sovereign for a final

and desperate assault on the intruders of the desert. The Persian forces converged at Nehāwand near Firūzān. The army thus commissioned by the Persians is reported to be one and a half hundred thousand strong, far outnumbering the Arab forces. Yezdjard took recourse to every possible device to raise this army : he incited his people in the name of religion and race to save the oldest Sassanid empire from ruin. The sacred flag *Durafsh Kāwiyani*. bedecked with precious stones, was taken out since it augured victory for the Persians. The sacred fire was carried from the oratory along with the army which marched to Nehāwand under the command of Emperor's son Mardān Shāh.

The Muslim General S'ad informed 'Umar of the latest developments. Thereafter, he came to Medina and told 'Umar that the people at Kūfa wanted permission to fall upon the Persians to give them a surprise.

'Umar convened a meeting of his advisers and told them : 'The situation is extremely dangerous. I intend to collect an army and set out to establish a camp at some place between the two cities and direct the forces to fight the enemy until God opens the gate of victory for us and decide whatever He has willed. If God grants us victory, the enemy will be beaten in its own cities.'

Talha b. 'Ubaydullāh replied, 'You are better aware of the situation. Whatever decision you will take would be preferable. On our part, we will abide by your decision.'

'Umar asked Uthmān to express his opinion. He said, 'O Commander of the faithful, I will advise you to ask the people of Syria and Yemen to send their forces and then you should lead an army recruited from the two holy cities and take the way through Kūfa and Basrah, so that all the Muslims in the way may be drafted to face the enemy jointly.'

'Umar then turned to 'Ali and asked for his opinion. 'Ali differed from the views expressed by others and advised 'Umar that he should not vacate Medina. He should remain here and entrust the command of the army to someone else. He also said that the governors of Basrah and other places should send their

troops to Iraq but the governors should remain at their own places. He said that if the Caliph suffered a defeat or was killed Islam and the Muslims would go all to pieces, nothing would then be possible and they would vanish into thin air.

'Umar agreed with 'Ali and acted on his advice. 'Umar enquired about the person to be appointed Commander-in-Chief and 'Ali said that he should better belong to Iraq. The matter was left to be decided by him and he selected N'omān b. al-Muqran al-Muzni for the post.

The collection of 'Ali's sermons, letters and utterances under the name of *Nahjul Balāghah*. compiled by Syed Razi, held in great esteem by the Shi'ite scholars, contains the conversation between 'Umar and 'Ali on the occasion of battle of Nehāwand. 'Ali replied when consulted about 'Umar partaking in the battle against Persians :

"In this matter victory or defeat is not dependent on the small or big number of forces. It is Allah's religion which He has raised above all faiths, and His army which He has mobilised and extended, till it has reached a point where it stands now and has arrived at its present position. We hold a promise from Allah and Allah would fulfil His promise and support His army. The position of the head of government is that of the thread for the beads as it connects them and keeps them together. If the thread is broken they would disperse and get lost, and would never come together again. The Arabs today, even though small in number, are big because of Islam and strong because of unity. You should remain like the axis for them, and rotate the will (of government) with (the help of) Arabs, and be their root. Avoid battle because if you leave the place, the Arabs will attack you from all sides and directions till the unguarded places left behind by you would become more important than those before you

"If the Persians see you tomorrow they would say : "He is the root (chief) of Arabia. If we do away with him

> we would be in peace." In this way this would heighten their eagerness against you and keenness to aim at you. You say that they have set out to fight against the Muslims. Well, Allah detests their setting out more than you do, and He is more capable of preventing what he detests. As regards your idea about their (large) number, in the past we did not fight on the strength of large numbers but we fought on the basis of Allah's support and assistance."[18]

Almost the same situation arose at the time of battle of Yarmūk when 'Ali, asked by 'Umar to express his opinion, gave a correct advice which speaks of his absolute sincerity. The battle of Yarmūk was also decisive for on it depended the continued possession of Syria and further advance of Muslim arms. Abu 'Ubayda had informed the Caliph that Heraclius had come in person to Hems and from there sent four separate armies by land and sea to crush the Arab forces. 'Umar summoned the Ansārs and Mahājirīn and read out the letter of Abu 'Ubayda. The news caused great excitement in Medina. Some pleaded that they should be permitted to go to the theatre of war, while 'Abdur Rehmān b. 'Awf suggested that the Commander of the faithful should himself lead the army to Syria in order to help their brethren. 'Ali opposed this suggestion and said :

> "Allah has taken upon Himself for the followers of this religion the strengthening of boundaries and hiding of secret places. Allah helped them when they were few and could not protect themselves. He is living and will not die. If you will yourself proceed towards the enemy and clash with them and fall into some trouble, there will be no place of refuge for the Muslims other than their remote cities nor any place where they would return to. Therefore, you should send there an experienced man and send with him people of good performance and well-wishers. If Allah grants you victory, then this is what you want. If it is otherwise, you would serve as a support for the people and a returning

place for the Muslims."[19]

One thing is quite apparent from this discourse of 'Ali. Had he borne some malice towards 'Umar, or been grudging, or considered 'Umar to be an usurper of the office of caliphate, he would have certainly welcomed destruction of his foe, particularly at the time when he was not to be held responsible for it in any manner. A battle-field is the most convenient place for getting rid of somebody through a ploy. But 'Ali was far above such small-mindedness. He always advised in the best interests of the Muslims whenever any problem of collective good arose, which shows his sagacity and sincerity. May God reward him with the choicest returns on behalf of Islam and Muslims whose well-wisher he had always been

'Ali however, gave a contrary advice when the Patriarch of Palestine sued for peace, but demanded the Caliph to come in person for signing the treaty of peace and taking over the keys of the city. Abu 'Ubayda intimated the terms to Medina whereupon 'Umar consulted the eminent companions about the course of action to be taken. 'Uthmān b. 'Affān expressed the view that the Caliph should not go there but force the enemy to surrender more abjectly. But 'Ali opined that 'Umar must go there for this was a momentous honour which could not be had at another occasion. He also said that this would relieve the burden on Muslims. 'Umar agreed to the suggestion of 'Ali and set out for Syria in Rajab, 16 A.H./August, 637 A. D. He asked 'Ali to look after the affairs of government in his absence.[20]

Journey of 'Umar to Syria

The journey of the Caliph who was the conqueror of two great empires of his day, the Byzantium and Persia, must be of interest to the readers. It was the occasion when pomp and ceremony would have been justified if only to impress the newly subjected people.

"Umar arrived at Jabia riding a grey camel. A part of the scalp without hair was shining in the sun since he wore neither a cap nor a turban on his head, and his

> legs were dangling on either side in the absence of stirrups. He had a bedspread which he used as the saddlecloth while riding and as the bed when he dismounted to take rest. His another possession was a leather bag stuffed with date-palm leaves which served the purpose of a pillow while taking rest. He wore a coarse cotton shirt with numerous stains and slits here and there."[21]

'Umar asked to send for the chief of those people in a town during his journey. When he came, 'Umar gave him his shirt to be washed and repaired. He also asked him to lend him a shirt for the time being. He immediately produced a shirt made of fine cloth. 'Umar enquired about the cloth and then put it on. No sooner his shirt, washed and repaired, was brought back than he put off the shirt lent to him and changed into his own shirt. The Christian Chief said to 'Umar, "You are the king of Arabia. Camel is treated unseemly for riding in this country, so put on a robe of fine cloth and take a mule for your ride instead of the camel. This will enhance your esteem in the eyes of the Romans." 'Umar replied, "The honour we enjoy is due to Islam. We cannot adopt anything save what is pleasing to God." A mule was brought on which he placed his tunic for it had no saddle and reins. He mounted on it but said the very next minute, "Hold it, hold it, I had never earlier seen any people riding a devil." His camel was brought again and he rode on it.[22]

It would be worthwhile to give here an account of the second journey of 'Umar to Syria undertaken in 18 A. H./639 A. D. taken from Sir William Muir s *Annals of the Early Caliphate*. 'Umar set out after appointing 'Ali to deputise for him in Medina.

> "His way lay though the Christian settlement of Ayla, at the head of the Gulf of Aqba. The reception he met here brings out well the simplicity of Omar, and his kindly feelings towards the Christians. He journeyed on a camel with small pomp or following; and as he

was minded to enter the village unrecognised, he changed places with his servant. 'Where is the Ameer ?' cried the eager crowds as they streamed forth from the villages to witness the Caliph's advent. 'He is *before* you, replied Omar, and he drove his camel on. So they hurried forward thinking that the great Caliph was beyond and left Omar to alight unobserved at the house of a bishop, with whom he lodged during the heat of the day."[23]

'Umar's Relationship with Prophet's Household

With the awe 'Umar commanded and his strictness in the affairs of government and restoring justice to the people, he had a close repport with the Prophet's household and was very considerate to the progeny of the Prophet. He always gave preference to the descendants of the Prophet over his own sons and other members of his family. Several incidents of the type have been related of which a few are given here.

Among the events reported by Husain b. 'Ali, one says about an occasion :

"One day 'Umar said to me, 'My son, come on occasions to see me. 'Accordingly I went to see him at a time when he was in camera talking to someone. His son was standing there as he had not been permitted to enter the room. I returned but after a few days 'Umar saw me and complained, 'My son, you did not come to me.' I replied. 'I came but you were talking to somebody in camera. I found your son returning so I also went back.' 'Umar said, 'You were more entitled to get permission for coming in than 'Abdullāh b. 'Umar. The faith that has been ingrained in our hearts and minds is a grace from God. Then putting his hand on his head, he added, 'It was due to your household that we got it".[24]

Ibn S'ad narrates from J'afar Sādiq b. Muhammad al-Bāqir, who heard his father 'Ali b. Husain[25] saying :

" 'Umar received a few pairs of shirts and trousers[26] from Yemen. He distributed them among the people who came donning that dress to the Prophet's mosque. 'Umar sat between the pulpit and the Prophet's grave receiving the greetings of the in-comers and replying them. Then entered Hasan and Husain coming out of the house of their mother Fatima, but they were not putting on the new dresses. 'Umar was saddened and when he was asked the reason for it, he said, 'I feel sorry for these boys since I had no dress of their size. The garments were larger and the boys are small.' Thereafter, he sent a messenger to Yemen to send two pairs for Hasan and Husain at the earliest. These were received and 'Umar felt satisfied when he got the two dressed in them. '[27]

Abu J'far relates:

"After the door of conquests was opened by Allah, 'Umar intended to fix a monthly or daily stipend for each individual but he summoned the elder companions to decide the categorisation and amounts of stipend to be paid to different persons. He asked them to express their views. 'Abdur Rahmān b. 'Awf opined, 'Begin it from yourself.' 'Umar replied, 'By God I will begin from the person who was nearest to Allah's Apostle and then fix the stipends for Banu Hāshim.' Accordingly he first allocated stipends for 'Abbās and 'Ali and categorised (his own clan) Bani 'Adi after five other clans. Thereafter he placed the people of Bani Umayya b. 'Abd al-Shams who had fought in the battle of Badr. The rule followed for allocation of stipends was the nearness in kinship. The first priority was given to Hasan and Husain who had been nearest to the Prophet.' [28]

In regard to the respectful attachment Umar had for the family of the Prophet, Shibli Nomāni writes in the *Al-Farooq*:

"Umar never took any action in serious and grave matters without first consulting 'Ali who was always sincere and

frank in giving his advice. When he went to Jerusalem, he entrusted the charge of Caliphate to 'Ali. The climax of their harmony and affinity was that 'Ali gave Umm Kulthūm, his daughter by Fātima, in marriage to 'Umar.[29]

"'Ali gave the name of 'Umar to his one son, Abu Bakr to another and Uthmān[30] to the third. It is a common practice that people name their sons after those whom they hold dear or regard as ideal personages."

The Inception of Islamic Calendar

One of greatest accomplishments of 'Ali which will last to the time Islam and Muslims servive, was the determination of the basis for beginning of Islamic calendar. In the days of 'Umar different methods were in use for recording events and happenings. There also existed difference of opinion on dating the events. Some favoured the regal year beginning from the birth or coronation of the ruler as was the practice of Persians while others wanted to adopt the system of the Byzantines. Some companions were of the opinion that the Islamic calendar should commence from the day Allah's Apostle was bestowed prophethood. 'Ali suggested that the day when the Prophet migrated from Makkah to Medina should be taken as the beginning of the Islamic era.[31] 'Umar and all other companions agreed to the suggestion of 'Ali and 'Umar accordingly directed that the events should be assigned a date calculated from the day of Prophet's migration to Medina.

Generally, the inception of a calendar is related to the birth or death of a great personality or to the establishment of an empire or a great victory. It is a peculiarity of Islam that it is not named after its Prophet nor its calendar is associated with any exalted personage including the Prophet of Islam who was the greatest man born on earth and the most admired person both by God and the Muslims. It was also not related to the brilliant victories won by the adherents of Islam. Inception of its calendar from the date of migration of the Prophet is indica-

tive of its peculiar way of thought and underlying wisdom since it points to the message of Islam. Anyone trying to go into its origin would know that Islam gives significance only to the faith and creed and considers it worth of being commemorated. Now, the conservation of creed in preference to all other things generally valued and taken pride of indicates that the triumph of faith or ideal really constitutes the occasion for beginning of a new era in human history. It also contains the lesson that the principle or doctrine has precedence over all events and happenings, and that man should be prepared to face all hardships for the sake of it.

Martyrdom of 'Umar

'Umar never allowed a *zimmi* (protected people, paying a special tax in consideration of being exempted from military duty) to enter Medina Mughīra b. Shu'eba, while acting as governor of Kūfa, had sought permission of the Caliph for allowing his slave Abu Lūlū, who was a master craftsman, to reside in Medina. His name was really Fīrūz and he was a Persian subscribing to the Magian faith. Some, however, claim that he was a Christian. During the war between Byzantium and Persia he was taken captive by the Byzantines; later on he was sent to Medina with other captives and slaves in 21/642 after victory in the battle of Nehāwand. Whenever Abu Lūlū saw any Persian boy in Medina, he used to melt into tears, hug him and say, ''Umar has eaten my heart.' Mughīra had a financial interest in having Abu Lūlū in Medina for the latter was a master craftsman expert in blacksmithy, carpentry and engraving. He used to make stone-mills for which Mughīra paid him four *dirhams* daily out of his earnings. One day he called upon 'Umar and complained that Mughīra made him work very hard and therefore he might be asked to charge less out of his wages. 'Umar asked about the work he was doing and on being told about it, he said: 'Keeping in view the work you do, the amount charged by Mughīra is not excessive. Fear God and serve your master faithfully.' 'Umar had thought that he

would ask Mughīra whenever he met him next, to be more lenient to his slave. But Abu Lūlū was filled with anger. He made a double-edged dagger and also poisoned it. He even met an old Persian chieftain Hurmuzān and asked his views about the quality of the dagger. He was satisfied on being told that no man could survive after receiving a wound from it. In fact, it was an Iranian-Magian conspiracy at work, fuelled both by personal spite and national-racial fervour.

The day 'Umar was assassinated 'Abdur Rahmān b. Abi Bakr had seen Hurmuzān, Abu Lūlū and Jufayna speaking in whispers and a dagger falling down accidentally at the time. Several historians have therefore put forth the view that the assassination of 'Umar was a well-planned conspiracy of the Jews and Iranians. There is nothing queer in it, for a people who have lost their country and freedom can do anything to avenge their spite, particularly if it happens to satisfy their national pride.

'Umar had taken the position to lead the pre-dawn prayers. The people standing behind 'Umar heard the *takbīr tahrīma* and then a sudden cry: 'The dog has killed me' Abu Lūlū assaulted 'Umar six times and inflicted wounds in the shoulder and the hips. Thereafer Abu Lūlū decamped with his dagger and stabbed whoever came in his way. Thus, thirteen persons were inflicted injuries by him. 'Abdur Rahmān b. 'Awf promptly threw a large cloak over him. Getting entangled he fell down and slit his throat for fear of being caught. 'Umar, on the other hand, fell down saying: 'Commandment of Allah is certain destiny.'[32]

'Umar asked who had attacked him. When he was told that it was the slave of Mughīra b. Shu'eba, he said, 'Thanks God, my assassin is not someone who has ever prostrated before God that he may altercate with me on its strength on the Day of Judgement. It was not the deed of an Arab.'[33]

'Umar sent for his son 'Abdullāh b. 'Umar and asked him to go to 'Aisha and seek her permission for his burial besides the grave of the Prophet. He also instructed his son not to refer

him as the Commander of the faithful for he was no longer their chief. 'Abdullah called upon 'Aisha who was weeping. He conveyed the greetings of 'Umar and his request. 'Aisha replied, 'I wanted to reserve that spot for me but today I will give him preference over myself.' When 'Abdullāh returned with the reply of 'Aisha, 'Umar said, 'Praise be to Allah, I esteemed nothing more than that sleeping chamber.' Then he added, 'But see, when I have given up the ghost take my corpse on a cot and keep it out of the door. Ask her permission again and if she refuses, bury me in the cemetery where other Muslims are interred. I am afraid that she might have granted permission because of my position.' When his dead-body was taken for burial, the Muslims were overwhelmed with grief as if there had never been such an adversity before. 'Aisha again accorded permission and he was laid to rest. He found his eternal resting place by the side of the Prophet and Abu Bakr [34]

"The death of Omar was a real calamity to Islam," says Justice Amīr 'Ali.[35] And the calamitous day was 26th Dhil Hijja 23/3rd November 644, when 'Umar was 63 years of age.

Grief of 'Ali

Abu Hujayfa relates: " 'Umar had died and his dead body lay covered with a mantle I was there when 'Ali came; he uncovered 'Umar's face, and said: 'Abu Hafs! Allah may have mercy on you. By Allah, there was nobody besides Allah's Prophet and you with whose record of deeds I would like to turn up before God.[36]

It has been reported that 'Ali was shedding tears after 'Umar died. When he was asked the reason for it, he replied, 'I am lamenting the death of 'Umar. His death has created a crack in Islam which will not be filled to the end of time.'[37]

Notes and References

1. 'Umar was of 52 years and six months when he took over as the Caliph while 'Ali was then in the 35th year of his age.
2. *Al-Bidāyah wan Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, p. 67.

3. *Ibid.* pp. 18-19. Ibn Is'hāq places this incident during the siege of Damascus. Be that as it may, the situation was crucial in any case.

4. Abu Yūsuf, *Kitāb al-Khirāj*, Egypt, 1302 A. H., p. 87; *Tārikh Tabari, op. cit.*, p. 252.

   It is possible that 'Umar deposed Khālid since he did not approve his certain decisions for such differences of opinion are always possible. Tabari says that 'Umar worte a letter to other governors after deposing Khālid in which he said, 'I have not deposed Khālid because of my displeasure, complaint or embezzlment, but owing to his immense popularity and attribution of the conquests to him while victory is from God. Allah alone is Almighty.' (*Tārikh Tabari, op. cit.*, p. 252) Sādiq 'Arjūn has discussed this incident in detail in his *Khālid b. al-Walīd* (Dar-al-Saudia, 1981).

5. Ibn Jauzi, *Seerat 'Umar ibn al-Khattāb*, Al-Matb'a al-Misr al-Azhar, 1331 A. H., p. 186.
6. *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 56.
7. *Ibid.*, Vol. VII, p. 60.
8. Al-Baghwi, on the authority of Abi 'Uthmān al-Nahdi.
9. S. Ameer Ali, *Spirit of Islam*, London, 1922, p. 278.
10. S. Ameer Ali, *A Short History of Saracenes, op. cit.*, p. 27.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.
12. Sir William Muir, *Annals of the Early Caliphate*, London 1882, p. 283.
13. For a detaild study see Ibn Kathīr's *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah*, Vol. VII; Ibn Kathīr's *Al-Kāmil fit Tārikh*, Vol. III : Baludhri's *Fatūh-al-Buldān*; *'Umar b. al-Khattāb* by Syed 'Ali Tantāwi and Nāji Tantāwi in Arabic. The *Al-Farūq* in Urdu by Shibli Nomāni (d. 1332 A. H.) can be gone through.
14. *Al-Kāmil fit Tārikh, op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 55-56.
15. *Al-Isti'āb op. cit.*, p. 2015.
16. Qazi Nūrullah Shāstri, *Majālis al-Mūminīn*; Abi al-Qāsim al-Qummi, *Al-Masālik Sharh al-Sharā'ye* (both the authors who subscribe to the Shi'ite faith mention this fact).
17. A city in mountainous region to the south of Hamadān.
18. *Nahjul Balāghah* compiled by Syed Razi (English rendering published by Ansāriyan Publications, Qum, Iran, 1988, p. 244.)
19. *Ibid.* p. 233.
20. Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Kāmil*, op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 399-402; *Tārikh Tabari*, op. cit., p. 402; *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 56.
21. Condensed from Ibn Jauzi's *Sirah Ibn al-Khattāb*.
22. *Al-Bidāyah wan Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VII, pp. 203-4.
23. Muir, Sir William, *Annals of the Early Caliphāte*, London, 1882, p. 236.

24. *Kanz al-Ummāl, op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 105; *Al-Isābah fi-Tamīz-is-Sahābah, op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 133.
25. Commonly known as Zainul 'Ābidīn.
26. Called *hulla*, which were made of the same cloth and were regarded as prestigious.
27. *Al-Isābah fi Tamīz is Sahābah, op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 106.
28. Abu Yūsuf, *Kitāb al-Khirāj*, Cairo, 1302 A. H., pp. 24-25.
29. Nawwab Muhsinul Mulk has discussed and produced irrefutable evidences in support of the genuineness of reports about the marriage of Umm Kulthūm with 'Umar in the *Ayāt-i-Bayyināt* (Mirzapur, 1870) Vol. I, pp. 27-164.
30. *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VII, pp. 331-32.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
32. *Tabaqāt al-kubra, op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 252-53.
33. *Usd al-Ghābā, op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 74.
34. *Tabaqāt al-Kubra, op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 244.
35. *A Short History of the Saracenes, op. cit.*, p. 43. Patrus al-Bustani, the Christian author of *Dā'iratul Ma'ārif* says that the cause of the assassination of 'Umar was not what the historians have generally related. Non-Muslims had instigated that slave to kill him so that Islam may be weakened by his death and its empire may be destroyed (Vol. II, p. 230).
36. Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Musnad Imām Ahmad.*
37. Syed Ahmad Zaini Dahlān, *Al-Futūhat al-Islāmiyah*, Makkah, 1312 A. H., Vol. II, p. 429.

V

'ALI DURING THE REIGN OF CALIPH 'UTHMAN

Oath of Allegiance to 'Uthman

Before 'Umar died he appointed a council of six notables to elect his successor. The members of this elective body were : 'Uthmān b. 'Affān, 'Ali b. Abi Tālib, Talha b. 'Ubaydullah, Zubayr b. al-'Awām, Sa'd b. Abi Waqqās and 'Abdur Rahmān b. 'Awf.[1] 'Umar had found it difficult to select anyone of them in preference to another since he said : 'It is not possible for me to assume responsibility for it during my life-time or after my death. If God wills well for you, He would make you agree on the best amongst you as He had brought about consensus on the worthiest man after the death of the Prophet.' 'Umar had, out of piety, dropped Sa'eed b. Zayd b. 'Amr b. Nufayl from the council since he happened to be his cousin. He had thought that the people might elect him because of his relationship to Sa'eed, although he was equally qualified and one of those given the glad tiding of paradise by the Prophet. 'Umar told the members of the council that his son 'Abdullah will participate in the deliberations of the council but without any authority, that it, simply as an observer. He further instructed : 'Until the Caliph is elected, Suhayb b. Sinān al-Rūmi will lead the prayers for three days 'Umar also expressed the wish that the members nominated by him

should take care to arrive at a decision at the earliest. At the same time he had observed : 'I do not think the people would prefer anyone save 'Uthmān or 'Ali.'

After the burial of 'Umar, Miqdād b. al-Aswad invited the members of the council to discuss the matter at his house. The deliberations became a bit heated but ultimately it was decided that three persons should withdraw their claims in favour of the remaining three. Thus Zubayr withdrew himself in favour of 'Ali, S'ad in favour of Abdur Rahmān b. 'Awf and Talha in favour of 'Uthmān. 'Abdur Rahmān thereupon said to 'Ali and 'Uthmān, 'Who amongst you is prepared to forgo his claim so that he may be asked to select one of the remaining two. I would ask you to select the worthier of the remaining two for the sake of Allah and Islam. 'Both 'Ali and 'Uthmān kept quiet and so 'Abdur Rahmān said again, 'I forgo my claim and I swear by God and Islam that I would take a decision most sincerely and with all possible care. I will entrust this responsibility to one of you who, according to my intelligence and wisdom is rated more admirable.' Both 'Uthmān and 'Ali assented to the proposal. 'Abdur Rahmān then had talks with both separately, acknowledged the virtues and talents of each and got an undertaking that whosoever was elected will do justice to all. He also got a pledge from them that they would obey the other who was finally elected as Caliph.

Thereafter 'Abdur Rahmān elicited opinion of the people about both the candidates, discussed the matter individually and collectively, tried to assess their attitude privately and publicly and interrogated even the women, Bedouins and outsiders coming to Medina and the children studying in the schools. For three days and night he engaged himself in this task. He did not find even two persons denying excellence of 'Uthmān. 'Abdur Rahmān slept little during these three days, spending as much time as possible in interviewing the people or praying God to help him to take a right decision.

The members of the council assembled on the fourth day at the place they had met earlier. Addressing 'Ali and 'Uthmān,

'Abdur Rahmān said, 'I have elicited the opinion of the people and have not found even one man who favoured one of you over the other or considered anyone as your peer.' Then he asked them to give an undertaking that if elected they would act justly and in case one was not elected he would obey the other. Thereafter he took both of them to the mosque where the call to Friday prayer was given. That day 'Abdur Rahmān wore the turban given to him by the Prophet, fastened his sword and deputed people to summon the notables among Muhājirīn and Ansār. The mosque was packed to capacity; 'Uthman sat in the rear not finding a place in front, since he was very modest. 'Abdur Rahmān b. 'Awf ascended the pulpit, stood silently for a while and then beseeched God in a lengthy invocation, which was not heard by some in the huge gathering. Thereafter he addressed the people saying : 'I have elicited your views privately and publicly but I have found none amongst you who considers anyone worthy of being elected Caliph as these two persons. Thereafter, he said : 'Come on O 'Ali and stand near me.' 'Ali went up and stood by his side. 'Abdur Rahmān held him by his hand and said, 'Do you declare solemnly on my hand that you will abide by the commandment of Allah and His Apostle and follow the lead of Abu Bakr and 'Umar ?' 'Ali replied, 'I cannot affirm that but I would try to discharge the obligations of the caliphate to the best of my ability.' 'Abdur Rahmān left hold of his hand and asked 'Uthman to come to him. He held him by his hand and repeated the question : 'Do you declare solemnly on my hand that you will abide by the commandments of Allah and His Apostle and follow the lead of Abu Bakr and 'Umar ?' 'Uthmān replied in affirmative.[2] Then raising his eyes towards the sky and holding 'Uthmān's hand, 'Abdur Rahmān said, 'O Allah, listen me and be a witness to it that I entrust 'Uthmān the burden of caliphate lying on me. 'Thereafter the people gathered round 'Uthmān to take the oath of fealty on his hand. 'Abdur Rahmān kept sitting on the pulpit where the Prophet used to sit and made 'Uthmān sit on the second step of its stair. People continued to come and take the oath. 'Ali b.

Abi Tālib also took the oath (whether at the beginning or at the end, is a disputed matter.)[3]

Social Status and Piety of 'Uthmān

'Uthmān's election as Caliph was perfectly justified from the view-point of his prominent position in the then Islamic society as well as his piety and services rendered to Islam.

Born six years after the year of Elephant, 'Uthmān was five years younger to the Prophet and had embraced Islam in its earliest phase when the Quraish had not started persecuting Muslims. He married the Prophet's daughter Ruqaiya and migrated to Abyssinia with her after the persecution by the Quraish intensified. The Prophet had then remarked about them : This is the first couple which has migrated for the sake of God after the families of Abraham and Lot. 'Uthmān returned from Abyssinia and again shifted to Medina after several other companions had migrated to that city. After Ruqaiya died, the Prophet joined 'Uthmān in wedlock with Umm Kulthūm, his another daughter, whence he came to be known as *Zun Nūrayn*, "the possesser of two lights."

The Quraish had a special regard for him 'Umar relates : "When the Prophet proposed to send me as his envoy to Quraish before the treaty of Hudaybia, I said to him, 'Should I suggest a man who is more admirable than myself, in the eyes of the Quraish, namely 'Uthmān b. 'Affān ? The Prophet summoned 'Uthmān and sent him to Abu Sufyān and the chiefs of Quraish as his emissary.'

'Uthmān met Abu Sufyān and the chief of Quraish to convey the Apostle's message to them Having heard what 'Uthmān had to say, they said, 'If you want to go round the K'aba, go round it.' He replied that he would not do so until the Prophet also did so.[4] When 'Uthmān returned from Makkah certain Muslims said to him, 'You must have availed the opportunity to circumambulate the House of God ?' 'How could you presume it about me ?' replied 'Uthmān, 'for, by God who has the power over my life, I would not have gone round the K'aba if

I had been detained there for a whole year and the Prophet had remained at Hudaybia and not circumambulated the House of God."[5]

In the meantime the rumour bruited abroad reached the Prophet at Hudaybia that 'Uthmān has been killed. He summoned the Muslims to give their undertaking. The Muslims flocked to the Prophet who was sitting under a tree. The Prophet took their pledge that they would not run away from battle. The Prophet himself held his hand saying, this is 'Uthmān's hand, and thus was taken the oath known as *Bayat-al-Rizwān.*[6]

'Umar was very considerate to 'Uthmān. Whenever someone wanted to know anything from 'Umar but dared not ask it directly, he took the help of 'Uthmān or 'Abdur Rahmān. 'Uthmān was known as *radīf* (the word signifies someone who shares the saddle of a horse or camel with anyone, that is, regarded as the closest or succeeding person to anyone having authority). When these two proved unaviling then the services of 'Abbās were utilized.[7] 'Uthmān had equipped the army enlisted for the expedition of Tabūk and also purchased the well known as Beir Roma for use of Muslims.

Tirmidhi records a report from 'Abdur Rahmān b. Khabbab who say : 'I was present when the Prophet urged upon his companions to donate handsomely for making preparations for the *Jaish al-'Usr* (the brigade of distress). 'Uthmān b. 'Affān said, 'O Allah's Apostle, I present one hundred camels complete with saddles for the sake of God.' The Prophet descended from the pulpit and said, 'If 'Uthmān does nothing more, this one deed of his will be enough for him.' Anas and 'Abdur Rahmān b. Samurah also report similarly about the open-handed philanthrophy of 'Uthmān.

Hākim relates from Abu Huraira that 'Uthmān twice earned paradise, once when he purchased Bair Rūma and again when he equipped the *Jaish al-'Usr.*

'Uthmān had purchased *Bair Rūma*[8] for twenty thousand *dirhams* and created a trust of it for the use of all Muslims. It was a big well owned by a Jew. Once the Prophet had expressed

the wish that someone might purchase the well for the use of Muslims and draw water from it alongwith others so that the Muslims might be benefitted by it for; this would procure him a special right of getting advantage from the gardens of paradise in lieu of it.[9] The Muslims were then in great need of potable water.

'Uthmān was elected to the office of caliphate at the age of 70 years according to Islamic calendar and 68 years in accordance with the Gregorian calendar.

Conquests During the Reign of 'Uthmān

Muslim conquests had come to a climax during the reign of 'Uthmān. The psychological transformation brought about by Islam—zeal for fighting in the way of God and attaining martyrdom, longing for paradise and disdain for the world and all that it contains, dauntlessness to face the enemy several times in number, heroic fortitude exhibited on such occasions and, above all, the succour of God—was the cause of brilliant victories won by the Arabs Persian and Byzantine possessions passed under their dominion and there remained no power to check their advance in North Africa. Kingdoms and fortified cities fell to them as if these were the pearls of a broken necklace.

It was perhaps a divine grace that the Providence had decreed that 'Uthmān should succeed 'Umar and the cycle of conquests set afoot during the reign of 'Umar should advance further and get consolidated. For most of the great generals and the governors of the provinces like Mu'āwiyah b. Abu Sufiān, 'Abdullāh b. S'ad b. Abi Sarah, Marwān b. al-Hakam and Walīd b. 'Aqbah were all Umayyads, related to 'Uthmān. They had been the prime movers for millions to enter the fold of Islam. That was undoubtedly a great blessing of God

Revolt by the people of Azarbaijān led to its reconquest and advance of Muslim forces to Tabristān during the reign of 'Uthmān 'Abdur Rahmān b. Rabi'a b. al-Bāhili over-ran Asia Minor and penetrating Armenia, established Islamic dominion over Marv, Balkh and Khwārism. The Muslims took their arms

as far as Tiflis and extended their control over the region lying between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. Later on, Mu'āwiyah captured Cyprus in the Mediterranean Sea and seized the region between Tripoli to Tanja in North Africa.

Under 'Uthmān the caliphate became a maritime power. A number of Byzantine vessels were captured and many more were added to the Muslim fleet by Mu'āwiyah and 'Abdullāh b. S'ad. The extended borders of the Muslim dominions required a strong navy to protect its coastal districts from the Byzantine naval attacks.[10]

The conquests made under 'Umar in Syria and Iran had shaken the Byzantine and Persian empires but they had not been completely overthrown. These were constantly endeavouring to instigate uprising in several outlying regions. These revolts were quickly suppressed by the Muslim forces in the reign of 'Uthmān which was equally important like extending the borders of the realm. Some of these revolts actually resulted in the advance of Muslim arms to the districts where they had not been taken earlier.[11]

Under 'Uthmān the Muslims captured Balkh, Harāt, Kābul and Badakhshān. Uprisings in southern Iran resulted in the conquest of Karmān and Sijistān. Effective measures were set on foot for the development of the material resources of the conquered lands, water courses were dug, roads made, fruit trees planted, and security was provided to trade-routs by the establishment of a regular police organisation. As stated earlier the Byzantine incursions had contributed to the advance of Muslim forces in Asia Minor in the region of Black Sea. Similarly, Tripoli and Barca in North Africa and Cyprus in the Mediterranean were conquered. A large fleet sent by the Romans to reconquer Egypt was destroyed off Alexandria.[12]

Righteous Caliphate of 'Uthmān

'Uthmān did not deviate from the policy chalked out by his predecessors. In justice and equality, enforcement of *sharī'ah* as the law of the land, commanding the good and forbidding the

evil, and maintenance of law and order, 'Uthmān's rule was a replica of the earlier caliphs. Tabri relates from Sālim b. 'Abdullāh : 'After 'Uthmān assumed the caliphate he performed the *haj* every year except the last year of his life. He established peace in his realm and got public proclamations made to the effect that all officials should present themselves on the occasion of *haj*; all should act righteously and abstain from evil; no believer should deem himself weak and unprotected; and if any wrong has been done to anyone he would, God willing, help him against the oppressor howsoever strong he may be. The people also acted on his declaration but there were factions which had formed splinter groups against him.[13] Ibn Kathīr also says in the *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah* that 'Uthmān used to summon all the provincial governors on the occasion of *haj* and the people were asked to prefer their grievances against them on that occasion so that the governors could be made to redress the wrongs committed by them.[14]

An Everlasting Achievement of 'Uthmān

That 'Uthmān brought about unanimity among Muslims in the recital of an identical Scripture, using the same spellings and the same arrangement of verses and chapters is an unending favour for which he deserves gratitude of all Muslims to the end of time. He got prepared several copies of the authorised version of the Scripture and sent them to the capitals of different Islamic dominions.

Imam Badr-ud-dīn Muhammad b. 'Abdullāh al-Zarkashi (d.794/1489) says :

> "People were permitted to recite the Qur'ān they had learnt by heart in whichever dialect they preferred. This gave rise to such a large number of variant recitations that distortion of the Scripture was feared. Therefore, the recitation of the Quran in a single dialect was made obligatory, which is still followed to this day. 'Uthmān is generally stated to be the compiler of the Qur'ān, but it is not correct. Precisely, according to the

historical evidence, 'Uthmān simply made it binding on the people to recite the Qur'ān in the same dialect, as was the custom of the Muhājirin and Ansār. It came about because the people in Iraq and Syria differed in their pronunciations which threatened to create differences among the Muslims.

"It was Abu Bakr who had already collected the Qur'ān in the shape of a book. 'Ali is related to have said: 'Allah may have mercy on Abu Bakr for he was the first man who collected the Qur'ān between two covers. No companion of the Prophet ever raised any objection to it in the time of Abu Bakr and 'Umar. The same arrangement of the scripture was followed by 'Uthmān who got its copies made out since differences had started cropping up. Allah enabled 'Uthmān to render a great service which drove out all differences and brought unanimity among the Muslims.[15]

'Ali is also reported to have said:

"If I had to face that situation instead of 'Uthmān, I would have also taken the same action as 'Uthmān."[16]

Ibn Kathīr has related in the *Al Bidāyah wan Nihāyah* on the authority of Suwayed b. Ghufla that 'Ali said:

"Lo: Do not be unjust to 'Uthmān. You allege that he modified the Scripture. By God, whatever he did (in bringing uniformity in recitation) was known to the companions of Allah's Apostle and had their approval to it. If I had been in his place, I would have also taken the same step as he did."[17]

Extension of the Prophet's Mosque

Another achievement to the credit of 'Uthmān is the extension of the Prophet's mosque. The walls of the mosque built during the life-time of the Prophet were made of unbacked bricks and trunks of date tress supporting a palm stick roof. No extension in the building was made by Abu Bakr. 'Umar extended the building but used unbaked bricks in the erection of

the walls. 'Uthmān extended the mosque greatly and erected walls of hewn and carved stones which were held together by a mixture of lime and clay. The columns were also made of carved stones and the roof was made of Indian teak.[18]

Subjugation of distant lands had brought in its train immense wealth and prosperity and the dwellers of the desert came to be acquainted, for the first time, with the luxury of urban centres of the then civilized world. The changed circumstances were, inevitably, transforming the attitude and way of life of the people as it has so often happened in the history of other peoples.

'Uthmān came to wield the sceptre during this period of transition. The older modes of thought and social norms were about to be changed. The social structure that had come into existence under the guidance of the Prophet had attached greater importance to simple and austere living and worldly benefits were rated in relation to their utility in earning eternal merit and felicity. This had held in check the longing for wealth, power and position. The time had not yet arrived when ambitious people were to start vying for earthly advantages.

The signs of change had become apparent by the time of 'Uthmān's caliphate. 'Umar had anticipated these changes but with his rare foresight he had held the realm with a strong hand and severely repressed the natural tendency to demoralisation. However, the successive conquests and the rush of wealth to the heartland of Islam started transforming the Islamic social structure and the way of life of the people.

'Uthmān remained strictly firm, allowed no complacency, nor he allowed the least deviation from the path of righteousness and justice but now he had to handle not the simple, hardy Arab nomads but those who were acquainted with the luxury and vices of the civilized nations. Man is predisposed to make use of affluence for living in luxury unless one's faith is strong enough to curb one's earthly desires. Wealth bedazzles man and moderation is normally the first casualty in such circumstances.

'Abbās Mahmūd al-'Aqqād has correctly evaluated the situation in the '*Abqariyāt al-Islāmiyah* in these words :

"The greatest difficulty (as it would be seen later on) was that although 'Uthmān did nothing which had not a precedent in the times of the earlier caliphs, the situation and the circumstances had changed completely. 'Uthmān had the pattern of Abu Bakr and 'Umar to guide him and his actual strength lay in his previous experiences and the political training in those conditions. The difficulty, however, was that he wanted to apply those experiences and patterns which had been put to use during the time of the Prophet and his immediate successors, while the circumstances in which he wanted to do so were entirely different. The people had changed in short, the whole atmosphere was unlike the earlier times."[19]

He goes on to say further:

"The time when 'Uthmān had joined his faith to Islam was entirely dissimilar to that when he took over the reins of caliphate. The Arabian society had changed and the Islamic culture had become a part and parcal of the world civilization that was common to all the advanced nations of the east and west."[20]

And this provided an occasion to the detractors of 'Uthmān to evaluate his actions on the standard set by the Prophet and earlier two Caliphs. 'Aqqād writes:

"The people living within the Islamic dominions led their lives like those in other countries; their societal patterns were very much alike, but they wanted their rulers to follow meticulously the standards set by Abu Bakr and 'Umar. They themselves fell short of the model set by the citizens during the times of Abu Bakr and 'Umar, they were inferior in deeds and morals, but wanted the Caliph to follow the same example.

"There can be no two opinions that 'Uthmān did not enjoy the same authority as exercised by Abu Bakr and 'Umar. Even 'Umar had apprehended the change despite his stern control and awe among the people, and therefore

he used to pray thus to God: O Allah, I am now old and my strength has waned and my subjects have exceeded greatly. Take me up from this world while I have not failed to restore the right of anyone nor committed any excess to anybody.

" 'Uthmān, too, had perceived the change in the circumstances and was apprehensive of its increasing further. He always warned the people, expressed his anxiety to the people whom he talked with and often said in his sermons: 'The nation is facing a trial. It has all been destined from which there is no escape. Worldliness is gaining a hold over the hearts and minds so firmly that no effort can succeed in dislodging it.'"[21]

Throwing light on the situation then obtaining 'Aqqād writes further:

"The greatest problem or rather the ordeal was that in the time of 'Uthmān the state was badly in need of the confidence of the people, but it was missing. The government often required strengthening, but that could also not be done. Thus, a government lacking both the confidence of the people and strength could not escape criticism and condemnation and schism and dissension"[22]

Thereafter 'Aqqād goes on to say:

"The way 'Uthmān presided over the foreign policy soon after his assumption of office, the fortitude and courage he exhibited in facing the problems arising suddenly, deserve to be praised. That was the right action to be taken by the Caliph. Moderate and cautious action was demanded by wisdom, and a lenient policy was the most appropriate in the case of complaints against the officers of the state."[23]

'Uthmān was first of all criticized for appointment of such functionaries of the state who had neither any service of Islam to their credit nor enjoyed any reputation for their piety. Some of them are reported to have taken measures that were either

disapproved or caused resentment specially among those who had an experience of the state officials during the time of the Prophet or Abu Bakr and 'Umar. People began to carp and nag at them although the Caliph or the ruler has to keep in view certain political and administrative considerations in the selection of governors and administrators. He cannot satisfy all the parties nor it is always possible to give weight to religious and moral aspects in certain matters.

In his lectures on Islamic Administration Kurd 'Ali says on the authority of Al-Tabari:

> ' Two-third of the higher officials appointed by the Prophet were from the clan of Banu Umayya since he always kept in view the talent and competence of his functionaries. He never selected those who had no experience of administration or were wanting in expertise. This denotes that the selection of military commanders, chiefs of political affairs and administrators is the responsibility of the head of the state. This is a matter in which decision is not taken on the basis of affluence or respectability or friendship or age, Capability is the only criterion in this matter which includes knowledge, expertise and skill to perform the duties entrusted to any person, and that the person selected has a knack for taking right decisions."[24]

Ibn Abi al-Hadīd has cited Justice 'Abdul Jabbār in defence of the policy followed by 'Uthmān in the selection of his higher officials. He says:

> "It cannot be asserted that every thing about the persons whom 'Uthmān had appointed as governors was known to him at the time of their selection. It is just possible that only the matters shedding light on their competence were known and nothing about their vices had been noticed."[25]

Discussing this issue Kurd 'Ali expresses the opinion that:

> "Was it not demanded by political strategy that 'Uthmān should repose confidence in the tribal support of his

own people since he was fully backed by them? It was but natural that they should have been more interested, in comparison to others, in making the rule of 'Uthmān succeed and achieve its end."[26]

Many more convincing arguments can be put forth in defence of 'Uthmān but we do not regard him unerring. We rather take him as one competent to take his own decisions and act upon them. Such a man sometime takes a right decision and often he makes a mistake in good faith. For no one save God is flawless and no human being is sinless except Allah's Apostle. We do not also consider Marwān b. al-Hakam, Walīd b. 'Uqba, 'Abdullāh b. S'ad b. Abi Sarah and others as beyond reproach. It is not at all necessary to deny or overlook whatever these persons might have done by taking undue advantage of their relationship to the Caliph or their own competence or confidence reposed in them, but there is no denying the fact that all those who found fault with them were also not sincere and selfless people. Each one of them had an axe to grind or was politically motivated. Discussing the campaign of disparagement against 'Uthmān, Mahmud 'Aqqād has correctly remarked that:

"Criticism of the Caliph was highly coloured and inflated. Advantage was taken of the right to freedom of expression, granted by Islam, and it was misused.

"Among those who came forward to censure 'Uthmān there were those who wanted to serve their own self-interest; those who did not act on what they preached; those who had been held guilty of committing crimes; one whose father had been convicted; one whose wife was separated for his contracting an illegal marriage; and, there might have been others who had no charge against them but had surely some malafide intention. All these factors have to be taken into account for the reasons of finding fault with the Caliph."[27]

We now give here, albeit briefly, the ferment which had been brewing and which culminated in the seige and murder of the Caliph. We will give a summary of the detailed account given

by Ibn Kathīr in the *Al Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah.*

A group of the people in Egypt, displeased with 'Uthmān, began making puerile accusations against him and talking loosely that he had demoted eminent companions of the Prophet and appointed inefficient and undeserving persons to the posts of governors. The man whom these people of Egypt detested most after 'Amr b. al-Aas was 'Abdullāh b. S'ad b. Abi Sarah. After being relieved of his charge in Egypt, 'Abdullah b. S'ad had engaged himself in the conquest of North-West Africa, the district of the Barbar tribes, and the remaining part of that region. Meanwhile a group of youngmen in Egypt, some of whom were the sons and successors of the Prophet's companions, united to fight him. These firebrands, of whom a majority was led by Muhammad b. Abi Bakr and Muhammad b. Abi Hudhayfa, advocated defiance of authority through violent means. They enlisted six hundred persons who were to proceed to Makkah during the month of Rajab under the pretext of performiug lesser pilgrimage and then to go to Medina for staging a demonstration against 'Uthmān. 'Abdullah b. S'ad b. Abi Sarah came to know of their plans and informed 'Uthmān of it. On coming to know that the malcontents were approaching Medina, 'Uthmān asked 'Ali to meet them before they entered the city and persuade them to go back. It is also reported that Uthmān had deputed certain other notable persons of Medina for the task but 'Ali had himself volunteered to go with them. However, 'Ali met the insurgents alongwith other prominent citizens of Medina at Juhfa. These rebellious people had held 'Ali in high esteem but when he rebuked them for their seditious activities, they were completely taken aback. Some of them expressed surprise on being disowned by 'Ali since they had supposed themselves to be the supporters of 'Ali and fighting the Caliph for his sake. 'Ali asked them about their complaints and argued with them that their allegations were baseless.[28] He persuaded them to go back to their homes. Unsuccessful in their efforts, the insurgents returned while 'Ali informed 'Uthmān about his deliberations and also advised him about the course of action to be taken by

him. 'Uthmān is reported to have given due weight to the suggestions of 'Ali,

The agitators of Egypt, Kufa and Basra, however, went ahead with their plans of subversion. They even forged letters and sent them under the name of eminent companions residing in Medina to incite the people against the Caliph.[29] In Shawwāl 35/April 656, a party of rebellious people set out from Egypt in the garb of pilgrims and on coming to Medina surrounded the city. The companions at Medina admonished the rebels and insisted that they should return to their homes. Asked by 'Ali to account for their reappearance they pointed to a letter which they said had been intercepted from a messenger of the Caliph heading towards Egypt. It was alleged to have been attested by the Caliph's seal and contained orders to the governor of Egypt to seize the insurgents on their return, to put some of them to sword, hang or cut the hands and feet of others Suspecting that it was a fictitious letter, 'Ali asked how its recovery by the Egyptians could be so promptly known to the groups returning to Kufa and Basra in different directions and also to bring them all back to Medina. To this straight question there was no answer but the insurgents insisted that the messenger intercepted by them was one of the slaves of 'Uthmān riding on a camel owned by the Caliph. 'Uthmān, on being asked about the letter said, 'This is an evidence against me but by God, I have neither written nor dictated it, nor, I know anything about it. The seal can also be forged.' Certain persons were satisfied by the explanation of 'Uthmān while others insisted on their allegation.

Ibn Kathīr writes : 'The letter was falsely imputed to 'Uthmān. He neither knew anything about it nor he had directed it to be sent.' Ibn Jarīr has stated, citing his sources that the Egyptians had intercepted the letter from a messenger which was addressed to the governor of Egypt. In it orders were given for beheading some, hanging others and amputation of the hands and legs of a few others. The letter was written by Marwān b. al-Hakam on behalf of 'Uthmān, citing the following Quranic verse in support of the suggested punishments.

> The only reward for those who make war upon Allah and His messenger and strive after corruption in the land will be that they be killed or crucified or have their hands and feet on alternate sides cut off, or will be expelled out of the land. Such will be their degradation in the world, and in the hereafter their's will be an awful doom.[30]

Ibn Jarīr further says that the insurgents undoubtedly deserved the punishment spoken of in the above verse but Marwān had no right to send a letter written and sealed on behalf of 'Uthmān through one of 'Uthmān's slaves and to use his camel for the purpose without obtaining his permission.[31]

Other historians who have examined the affair in greater detail are of opinion that the imputation of this letter to 'Uthmān was a well-planned conspiracy designed to subvert his authority. Al-Haithami writes in the *Muwarid al-Dhamān Ilā Zawāid Ibn Habbān* :

> "Then the Egyptians returned. During their way back to home a man riding a camel crossed them and then went ahead. He returned and then again went forth. The people identified him and asked him what was his business. They assured him of the safety of his life and enquired about his errand. He told them that the Commander of the faithful had sent him to the governor of Egypt. On making a search of his person they found a letter from 'Uthmān, bearing his seal, directing the governor of Egypt to hang or amputate hands and legs of those people. The party returned to Medina and said to 'Ali, "Do you see what this enemy of Allah has written about us ? Now, by God, we have a right to shed his blood. You should now accompany us." 'Ali replied, "By God, I will not accompany you." The reply of 'Ali made them look one another with a stare of astonishment and some of them said to others, "Do you fight for the man who is indifferent to you ?"[32]

It is also related that 'Ali said to those people :

"O Men of Basra how did you came to know what happened to the people of Egypt ? You had gone several stopovers ahead on your way and then have returned to us. By God, this is a conspiracy hatched here in Medina.[33]

Open Revolt and Martyrdom of 'Uthmān

Thereafter the rebels raised an insurrection and came out in open revolt which was, in any case, completely unjustifiable, particularly at a time so near to that of the Prophet and the first two Caliphs. But as 'Aqqād has said, 'It was a mutiny by those rabble rousers who were devoid of the fear of God and nothing was unseemly for them. The insurgents blockaded the house of 'Uthmān and obliged him to take shelter within his house. The citizens of Medina including many companions did not come out of their houses. The sons of a few companions including Hasan, Husain, 'Abdullāh b. Zubayr and 'Abdullāh b. 'Umar came out to argue with the rebels and guarded the entrance of 'Uthmān's house. The blockade lasted from the end of Dhi Qada to 18th Dhil Hijja/end of May to 17th June when 'Uthmān was unable to join the congregational prayers in the mosque. A day before, a large number of people, both Ansār and Muhājirīn, numbering about 700, assembled in house of 'Uthmān. They included 'Abdullah b. 'Umar, 'Abdullah b. Zubayr, Hasan, Husain, Abu Huraira and a large number of their slaves. They were strong enough to repel the insurgents if they had been permitted by 'Uthmān to fight the rebels but 'Uthmān said 'To those who feel obliged to me I ask them in the name of God to restrain themselves and go back to their houses. This appeal so sobered down the people that some of those present there said to their slaves : 'You would be free if you sheathe your sword.' The last man to leave 'Uthmān was Hasan b. 'Ali.'[34]

Buladhuri writes in the *Ansāb al-Ashrāf* that the mutineers attacked 'Uthmān house with a volley of arrows which drenched

Hasan in blood and wounded Qanbar, the slave of 'Ali, who were guarding his door. Abu Mohammad al-Ansāri confirms the report for he saw 'Uthmān standing inside his door and Hasan b. 'Ali defending him. He claims to be one of those who carried Hasan to safety after he had been wounded.[35]

'Ali requested 'Uthmān to allow him to fight the rebels in his defence but 'Uthmān replied, 'I ask anyone who believes in God and feels himself under obligation to me that he should not shed his blood for me.' 'Ali repeated his request and again he was given the same reply. Thereafter 'Ali went to the mosque. People asked him to step forward and lead the prayer. 'Ali, however, said in reply, 'I cannot lead the prayer at the time when the Imām is confined to his house. I will offer my prayer alone. 'He went back to his house after performing his prayers by himself.[36]

The blockade of 'Uthmān's house became more rigorous, cutting off all contacts from outside. As no water remained in his house, he asked for water from the Muslims outside. 'Ali went to 'Uthmān's house with a water-bag. He could enter the house with great difficulty, the rebels objecting and inveighing against him. His steed left outside the house was let loose by the rebels.[37]

Another report recorded by Baládhuri shows that 'Ali also sent three water-bags through a few persons belonging to Banu Hāshim and Banu Umayyah, who delivered them to 'Uthmān with great difficulty and sustained injuries in the effort.[38] Certain works by the Shi'its scholars as, for example, *Nāsikh at-Tawārīkh* and *Al-Fawā'id al-Rizwīyah* have also referred to the incident.

The chronicles record that Mu'āwiyah suggested to 'Uthmān, 'Came with me to Syria before an attack is made on you.' To this 'Uthmān had replied, 'Even to save my neck from being hacked to pieces I will not quit the land wherein the Prophet resteth.' Thereupon Mu'āwiyah asked permission to send a force to defend him in Medina. But 'Uthmān replied, 'No, I will not allow those who dwell round the Prophet's home to suffer scarcity by quartering an army with them.' 'In that case', said

Mu'āwiyah, 'I see naught but destruction awaiting thee, O Commander of the faithful. These tyrants will not leave you alive.' 'Uthmān rejoined, 'Then let the Lord be my defence; He sufficeth for me.'[39]

The rebels became violent. Some of them and a few among those attending 'Uthmān were killed. 'Abdullah b. Zubayr and Hasan b. Ali sustained several injuries.[40]

Asked by the rebels to resign from Caliphate, 'Uthmān replied: 'It is for you to elect another Caliph. I will in no case put off the garment wherewith the Lord has clothed me.[41]

Uthman had declined to abdicate since the Prophet had once told him: 'O 'Uthmān, God will perhaps endue you with a garment. Do not put it off if the people ask you.'[42]

Nā'ila, the wife of 'Uthmān reports that the day 'Uthmān was killed, he was keeping fast.[43]

Nā'fe b. 'Umar relates that the day he was slain, he had told the people early in the morning that he had seen the Prophet in a dream that night.[44] At the time he was assassinated, he was reciting the Qur'ān lying open before him.[45]

It was 18th Dhill Hijja, 35/17 June, 656 when the aged Caliph was killed.

Hāfiz Taqī-ud-dīn as-Subki (d. 756/1355) says: 'We believe that 'Uthmān was the rightful Caliph and a martyr. God saved the companions from shedding his blood for which the accursed Satan was alone responsible. There is nothing to show that any companion of the Prophet approved of his killing, rather it is manifestly established that everyone of them detested the crime'.[46]

Character of 'Uthmān

We conclude this tragical chapter, calamitous for the Muslims, with the remarks of Mahmūd al-'Aqqād throwing light on the character of 'Uthmān and the fortitude with which he faced the tribulation.

"In comparison to those who had come from other places to censure and remonstrate with him, 'Uthmān stands out

as a man with unflinching faith and conviction. He was one of those few persons who had so completely transformed themselves under Islam from the days of pagan past that one finds it astounding to believe how he had attained those heights of piety and godliness

"A unique strength of faith and perseverance is required for continued self-introspection and refraining from doing anything to harm anyone when one's own life or that of another person is in danger. When 'Uthmān came to know that he would not be able to escape his assassins, he sent off all those who were present in his house lest anyone of them may be put to harm. When he was asked to abdicate, he refused. His defiance was not because he had anything valuable that he did not want to part with; his life was the only precious thing he had with him and it was already in danger. Actually, all the historians are agreed that the assets he had on the day he bid farewell to the world were much smaller than that when he took over as a Caliph. He refused to give up the caliphate since he knew that it would open the gates of insurrection and bloodshed. He had repeatedly said that the people who were then tired of him would later on yearn that he had ruled for a hundred years more. Therefore, he did not want to become a party to their disastrous action.

"If we leave aside, for a moment, the accidental happenings and scan the history of Islam as a chronicle of values and ideals, we find it agonizing (that 'Uthmān had to make such a sacrifice for maintaining his moral standard). But if we evaluate these events in the light of the ideals and values, we would see that there has never been a time in history when there were no accidental happenings. Differences between the people are never baneful, for man always comes across them, but it is much more significant how stoutly and with what conviction any ideal has been defended. And this is self-evident as day

from the martyrdom of 'Uthmān."[46]

'Aqqād concludes his reflections with the words:

"Although the death of 'Uthmān was a great calamity, it was a blessing in disguise like other disastrous happenings which bring about a change for the better in the lives of individuals and the community. Those whose faith in Islam was still not firm witnessed how a ruler whose dominions extended from the borders of China to the shores of Mediterranean Sea could be made to account for his actions.

"The event imparts us the lesson that an aged man of ninety years, when filled with the spirit of faith, blockaded in his house alone and without any friend and supporter, does not allow anyone to put his life in danger for his sake although he could draw on thousands of defenders who would have willingly shed their blood at the place where he was denied even a drop of water."[47]

Notes and References :—

1. All the six persons were among those ten, the *'ashra-i-mubashsherah*, who had been predicted by the Prophet to enter paradise.
2. The people were satisfied with the working of Abu Bakr and 'Umar and considered it as the best and most appropriate way of running the caliphate. Therefore, 'Uthmān agreed when he was asked to follow in their footsteps. This also satisfied 'Abdur Rahmān b. 'Awf. On the other hand, 'Ali being an accomplished scholar of the Quran and *sunnah* of Prophet, was competent enough to formulate his own juristic opinions and hence he rejected this condition, although this would have been considered unsatisfactory by the masses. The people had an experience of Abu Bakr and 'Umar and they gave preference to 'Uthmān in comparison to 'Alī when the former promised to follow the lead of the first two caliphs.
3. *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah op. cit.*, Chap. VII, pp. 144-47. We have preferred Ibn Kathīr to other annalists since his narrative is most comprehensive and based on the reliable reports contained in the authentic works of hadith.
4. *The Life of the Prophet, op. cit.*, p. 503; *Al-Sirah ibn Hishām*, Vol. II, p. 315.

5. *Zād al-Ma,ād, op. cit.*, Voi. I, p. 282.
6. *Ibid.* Vol. I, p. 382.
7. *Tārikh Tabari, op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 83.
8. The well is situate in the plain of al-'Aqīq near the place where rain water used to be accommulated. It is now known as Zughāba and lies to the noth-west of Medina. The well had plenty of potable water. In view of the dire need of Muslims for its water, the Prophet had urged his companions to purchase it and create a public trust. 'Uthmān purchased the well from its owner, an avaricious Jew, who sold it after a hard bargaining, and thus fulfilled the wish of the Prophet.
9. *Al-Jauharata fi Nasbat-al-Nabi, op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 173.
10. Shaikh Muhammad Khazri Bak, *Tārikh al-Umam al-Isālmiyah*, Cairo, 1969, Vol. II, pp. 27-30.
11. Shaikh Abdul Wahhāb Al-Najjār, *Al-Khulfa al-Rashdān*, p. 270.
12. Amir 'Ali, *A Short History of Saracenes, op. cit.*, pp. 43-44.
13. *Tārikh Tabri, op. cit.*, Vol. V, 134.
14. *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, p. 218.
15. Badr-ud-din Muhammad b. 'Abdullah Zarkashi, *Al-Burhān fi Uloom il Qur'ān*, (Dar al-Ihyā al-'Arabiya).
16. *Ibid.* p. 240.
17. *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 218.
18. *Al-Burhān, op. cit.*, p. 501; Samhūdi, *Waf'ā al-Waf'ā bi-Ikhbār Dār-al-Mustafa*, Beirut, 1981, p. 3.
19. *Al-'Abqariyāt al-Islāmiyah op. cit.*, p. 671.
20. *Ibid*, p. 770.
21. *Ibid*, p. 799.
22. *Ibid*, p. 826.
23. *Ibid*, p. 804.
24. Kurd Ali, *Al-Adārat al-Islāmiyah, op. cit.*, p. 102.
25. Abi al-Hadīd, *Sharh Nahjul Balāghah, op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 12.
26. *Al-Adārat al-Islāmiyah*, p. 103.
27. *Al-'Abqariyāt al-Islāmiyah*, p. 706.
28. Details can be seen in Ibn Kathīr, Vol. VII, pp. 170-71.
29. A number of historians are of the view that it was 'Abdullah ibn Sabā al-Sam'āni, a Jew from south Arabia who had accepted Islam to camouflage his activities to wreck the caliphate from within. More details about him would be given later on.
30. Q. 5 : 33; Abi J'afar Muhammad b. Jarīr al-Tabari, *Tārikh al-Umam wal-Mulūk, op cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 104-105.
31. *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 186.
32. Nur-ud-dīn 'Ali b. Abi Bakr al-Haithami, *Muwārid al-Dhamān Ilā*

Zawā'id Ibn Habbān, Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, p. 532.

33. *Tārikh al-Umam wal-Malūk, op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 105. There is another reason to show that the letter was a forgery. The letter said to have been sent by 'Uthmān was addressed' to Abdullah b. S'ad b. Abi Sarah, the governor of Egypt. But 'Uthmān and Marwān both knew that he had already been permitted to come to Medina and therefore he would then not be in Egypt. (Al-Tabari, Vol. V, p. 122). At the time this letter was written, the governor of Egypt residing in al-Fustāt was Muhammad b. Abi Hudhaifa (Qazi Abi Bakr Ibn al-'Arabi, *Al-'Awāsim wa al-Qawāsim*. p. 113).
34. Ibn Kathir, *At-Nidāyah wan-Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VII, pp. 181-82.
35. Balāduri, Ahmad b. Yahyā, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, Egypt, 1959, Vol. V, pp. 95-96.
36. Sādiq Ibrāhim Arjūn, *'Uthmān b. 'Affan Dhun-nūraym*, Dar-as-Sa'ūdiyah, 1981, pp. 218-19.
37. *Al-Bidāyah wan Nihāyh, op. cit.* Vol. VII p 187.
38. *Ansāb al-Ashrāf, op. cit.*, pp. 68-69.
39. *Tārīkh al/Umam wal Malūk, op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 100.
40. *Sharh* Nahjal *Balaghah, op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 286.
41. *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 184.
42. *Jam'e Tirmidhi*, Hadith no. 3705.
43. *Al-Bidāyah wau Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 183.
44. *Ibid*, Vol. VII, pp. 184-85.
45. Al-Hāj, Ibn Amīr, *Al-Taqrīr wal-Tahbir Sharh al-Tahrīr*, Bulaq, 1316 A. H., Vol. II, p. 260.
46. *Al-Abqariyāt al-Islamiyah, op. cit.*, pp. 708-709.
47. *Ibid*, p. 837.

VI

CALIPHATE OF 'ALI

For a few days after the demise of 'Uthmān the administrator of Medina Ghāfqi b. Harb and other citizens of the city awaited in suspense about the person who comes forward to assume the reins of caliphate.[1] The Egyptians were insistent that 'Ali should take over as the new Caliph but 'Ali declined. He hid himself in walled groves; nobody knew what to do in such a situation. At last 'Ali yielded to the entreaties of his friends. Before the oath of allegiance was taken a public opinion survey was made in Medina. Everybody opined that no one except 'Ali was competent to hold that precarious office. In fact, nobody was left there after Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān who had the ability and competence of 'Ali to hold the helm of Islamic empire at that crucial stage. A report says :

> " 'Ali came to the mosque clad in a wrapping and a woollen turban. He had his shoes in his hand. Leaning on his bow, he ascended the pulpit and received the oath of fealty from the people. It was Friday, the 24th Dhill Hijja, 35 A. H. (23rd June, 656).[2]

First Sermon of 'Ali

The time for Friday prayer arrived. When 'Ali ascended the pulpit, those who had not earlier pledged allegiance took the oath of fidelity. It was the last Friday of Dhil Hijja when 'Ali

first addressed the congregation as their Caliph. After praising God he said :

"Allah has sent down His Book as the Guide which elucidates the good and the evil; so adopt the good and eschew the evil. Allah has made many thing inviolable; of these the highest is the (life of a) Muslim. Allah has firmly integrated the rights of Muslims through *tauhid* (Oneness of God) and sincerity. He is (alone) a Muslim from whose hands and tongue all other Muslims are safe, except that the religion and its law require any Muslim to be reproved and dealt with according to law. It is not meet for any Muslim to put another Muslim to harm save that it becomes mandatory to do so. Make haste to discharge the obligations you owe to the commeners and the elites both. The people are in your front and the Doomsday behind you. It is approaching fast, keep yourself light so that you reach your destination. The life of the hereafter is awaiting you. Fear God in fulfilling your obligations to the creations of God and their habitation. You will be questioned even about the beasts and the land (on the Day of judgement). I ask you again to obey Allah and keep away from His disobedience and sins. Adopt if you find anything virtuous; evade if you find an evil.

"And remember, when ye were few and reckoned feeble in the land, and were in fear lest men should extirpate you; how He gave you refuge, and strengthened you with His help and made provision of good things for you, that haply ye might be thankful."[3]

It was the most appropriate sermon delivered at the right place and right time. The Commander of the faithful had invited attention towards what Muslims required to be reminded. The disastrous conditions they had brought upon themselves had been caused by losing the sense of the dignity of Muslims and inviolability of Muslim blood. The blood of Muslims had been

rendered so cheap that Caliph ʻUthmān had to become the victim of their insurgency. This calamity had befallen in Medina, near the grave of the Prophet and his own mosque in the presence of the Muslims. Therefore it was incumbent for the successor of the departed Caliph to dwell upon on the inviolability of Muslim life and blood in his first address, urge the people to inculcate awe of God and remind them of the grave responsibility lying on all as the custodians of the dominion and authority bestowed by God on them – their obligation to all the creatures of God including the beasts and the land.

ʻAli adverted, in his pithy and articulate address, what would be the guiding policy of the new government. He said : ʻAdopt if you find anything virtuous, evade if you find an evil.' The verse from the Qur'ān recited by him thereafter was very timely since it reminded Muslims to compare their earlier and present positions. There was the time when they were fewer in numbers, materially weak and culturally backward. Nobody in the world thought of them as of any consequence : they were like the piece of meat on the palm which could be snatched away by any bird of prey. These were the people who had gained power and prestige, a vast empire, peace and security and affluence. God had made them glorious, their flag was fluttering over land and sea and all other nations had been filled with their awe.

Troublesome Times

ʻAli's accession to caliphate took place at a time when the situation was most difficult and complicated. Caliph ʻUthmān had been brutally killed a few days back which was shocking and abominable to all conscientious men. Scandal-mongers were spreading rumours; everybody asked the other what was going to happen next. The thorny problems of the state were being discussed everywhere and everybody had a new suggestion to make. To this was added the cry of vengeance from certain quarters which had been a passive spectator of the ghastly crime of the late Caliph's murder. Among these agitators the foremost were

the Egyptians and Iraqis and Bedouins from the Arabian desert.

Mutinous conditions in any country normally result not only in the break up of law and orders but also camouflage those objectives which keep a nation or country united. At the time Arbia was passing through a crisis, one Caliph had been killed, the other was not firmly in the saddle and a sort of vaccum existed in the nation which constituted the greatest danger for the stability of the country in those unsettled conditions.

'Abbās Mahmūd al-'Aqqād has discussed the precarious and perplexing situation 'Ali had to face as the Caliph of Muslims although he was completely blameless since he had exerted more than anyone else among the aged companions to save the situation and his son Hasan had actively defended the late Caliph. He says :

> "'Ali received the oath of fealty after the mishap which was one of the most tragic and bloody events of Islamic history. Caliph 'Uthmān had been done to death in his old age after being confined in his own house. He would have died of thirst if his murderers had prolonged the blockade for a few days more.
>
> "The most delicate aspect of the whole affair consisted of the fact that the situation had become so involved and intractable that no coarse was left to resolve the dispute. It was something destined which, it seems, would have to come to pass in any case. Those who were responsible for this disastrous event were many and dispersed. There were different groups : if one became placid, the other became active and violent: leaving the problem as tangled and out of control as it had ever been. The groups that were well-disposed and spiteful were exerting equal pressure. but it was simply unfortunate that the measures that hastened the tragedy were taken by 'Uthmān himself. May be that he had taken those measures after giving full thought to them, but their reaction was natural and led to the result not different

from what his enemies had desired."[4]

He goes on to say :

"The difficulty with 'Ali was that he had to hold the reins of his charger tightly and at the same time remove the hurdles in the way so that his speed was not slowed down because of any barricade in his way."[5]

Yet another difficulty was that those who had committed the crime had not been identified. No legal action could be taken against them since even the wife of the late Caliph had not been able to make out the culprits.

But the situation was even more complex. As 'Aqqād says :

'Once 'Ali desired to punish the murderers of 'Uthmān. His entire soldiery numbering ten thousand turned up with lances in their hands crying that all of them were responsible for the murder of 'Uthmān. If punishment was to be accorded to any one, all of them should be punished."[6]

He says further :

'Whenever any one insisted that the culprits should be punished, 'Ali replied : 'I am not unaware of what you know, but how should I deal with the people on whom I exercise no authority, or rather they dominate over us. These are the people who had been assisted by your slaves and the Bedouins had also joined forces with them. They are all before you, they are doing what they desire. Do you see any possibility of gaining a hold upon them and taking the action you desire ?

"If the persons demanding punishment to the murderers of 'Uthmān had adopted the right course, they should have extended their support to the Caliph, so as to enable him to enforce the law. It was then that they should have called for punishing the calprits in keeping with the laws of *Sharī'ah*."[7]

Ibn Hajar has described the situation then obtaining in the *Al-Isābah fi-Tamīz is-Sahābah*. He says :

"'Ali took the stand that the people demanding retribution

should first submit to the head of state, the heirs of 'Uthmān should lodge a plaint against the offenders, and then the law of *Sharī'ah* would take its course. Those against him insisted that criminals should be identified and slain. But 'Ali held the view that no retribution was possible without any complaint and evidence in its support. Both the parties were competent to form a juristic opinion. There were also a few among the companions of the Prophet who had remained neutral and not taken part in the battle as partisans of any party. 'Ammār's martyrdom had, however, left no doubt that 'Ali was right in his stand, and thus all the misgivings in this regard had been cleared."[8]

Kūfa as the Capital

'Ali shifted his capital to Kūfa[9] in Iraq which became the new administrative and military centre of his dominion. It may be asked why 'Ali chose Kūfa for his residence and the seat of Islamic realm, since Medina had enjoyed that position from the time of the Prophet to the martyrdom of 'Uthmān.

The reason, it seems to me, was that 'Ali wanted to spare his beloved city, where the Prophet had migrated, from internal strife and possible military depredations foreseen by him as the writing on the wall: sanctity of the place which had the Prophet's grave and his mosque demanded that it should no more be the venue of any further disorder. A man like 'Ali should have naturally been anxious in this regard; for, after a few years the disastrous event of Harrah did take place during the reign of Yazīd which stunned the entire nation of Islam because of the ravages committed in that holy city. However, Mahmūd al-'Aqqād had attributed geographical location, administrative convenience and cultural reasons for the choice of Kūfa.

> "'Ali made Kūfa the metropolis of Islamic empire owing to political and strategic compulsions. The Islamic empire needed a central place, at that stage, where all the nations under it could repair conveniently. It had

to be a place at the crossroad of trade routes to India, Persia, Yemen, Iraq and Syria. Kūfa had also developed as a cultural centre of caligraphy. language, recitation, geneology, poetics and storytelling. The place was eminently suited for being made the capital of the empire."[10]

Battle of Jamal

After the pledge of allegiance had been given to 'Ali, Talha, Zubayr and several other prominent companions of the Prophet approached him to punish the murderers of 'Uthmān in accordance with the law. 'Ali, however, contended that the culprits were not a few individuals; they had a large number of supporters and defenders and hence they could not be chastized in a day.[11]

Talha and Zubayr went away to Makkah where they met 'Āisha who had gone there for the pilgrimage. With her they repaired to Basra demanding retribution for 'Uthmān's murder. 'Ali, on coming to know these developments, made haste to reach Iraq leaving Sahl b. Hunayf[12] as his deputy in Medina. Sahl b. Hunayf was later on summoned by 'Ali to Iraq giving the charge of the city to Abul Hasan al-Māzni. 'Ali halted at Zū Qār and sent 'Ammār b. Yāsir and Hasan b. 'Ali to Kūfa with the message to send reinforcements. After collecting his forces 'Ali advanced to Basra, where he gave battle to the force of Talha, Zubayr and 'Āisha on the day of Jamal,[13] by the end of Jamadi-al-Ākhir, 36 A. H. 'Ali emerged successful in the battle but he forbade pursuit of the fleeing army, killing of wounded soldiers and plunder of any kind.[14] A number of persons enlisted in the army of 'Ali demanded distribution of booty captured from the enemy but 'Ali rejected their plea. Sabāites altercated with 'Ali on the issue, but when 'Ali asked who would like 'Āisha, the mother of the faithful, to be allocated to him, they had no reply.[15]

'Ali did not start the fighting. The engagement took place only after the other party attacked 'Ali's forces.

Tahāwi relates from Zayd b. Wahb that 'Ali had made camp at Dhi Qārah. He sent 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās to Kūfa for parleys with the opposite party but they showed disinclination to accept his suggestions. They, however, sallied forth when challenged by 'Ammār. Zayd also says that he was one of those who had come forward on the occasion along with others. Other reports also show that Zubayr and his men opened hostilities and then 'Ali had to fight them.[16]

Respect Accorded to 'Āisha

'Ali showed highest marks of repsect to 'Āisha after the battle was over.

'Āisha was given a warm send off, record the historians, with a retinue of 40 women and a large number of body-guards as her escort. She was also presented a purse of 12,000 *dirhams* which was further augmented by 'Abdullāh b. J'afar b. Abi Tālib. She was not put to any trouble except that she had received a scratch from an arrow in the battle-field. The day she set off for Medina, 'Ali remained present along with others. 'Āisha bade farewell to all, saying, 'My sons, nobody should have any cause of complaint against the other. If there had been any grievance or misunderstanding between me and 'Ali, it was not more than what sometimes arises between a woman and her in-laws. Notwithstanding my grouses, 'Ali is among the righteous of the nation.' 'Ali rejoined : 'By God, mother of the faithful has told you the truth. We had no more differences than related by her. She is the wife of your Prophet in this world and the next.' 'Ali accompanied 'Aisha on foot for a few miles. He spent the whole day attending her when she left Basra on Monday, 1 Rajab 36/24 December 656.[17]

A number of witnesses have reported that 'Aisha used to repent on her action and often said : 'Would that I had died before the day of *Jamal*.' She wept on remembering the incident so bitterly that her head-scraf used to get wet with tears.[18]

After the battle was over, 'Ali inspected the dead bodies of the slain soldiers. Most of those killed in the battle were

recognised by the people of Basra as rabble-rousers. 'Ali led their funeral prayers and ordered them to be buried collectively.[19]

On his way back from the battle of Jamal Zubayr stopped for rest at a place called Wādi al-Sab'ā. He was pursued by 'Amar b. Jarmūz who overtook Zubayr when the latter had fallen asleep, and he killed Zubayr. Talha was wounded by an arrow shot by Marwān b. Hakam. He came to Basra where he died due to saturation of blood.[20] According to another report he was killed in the battle and recognised by 'Ali who wiped his face and said : 'Allah may have mercy on you, O Abū Muhammad. It is heart-rending for me to find you here beneath the stars of the sky.' Thereafter he said lamantingly : 'God, I bemoan for all that has happened and wish that I had died twenty years earlier '[21]

Zubayr was beheaded by 'Amr b. Jarmūz who took the head of Zubayr to 'Ali in the hope that he would be applauded for the feat and rewarded richly for it with some post of responsiblity. But when he sought permission to present himself before 'Ali, the latter said : 'Do not allow him to come in. Instead, give him the tidings of hell !' Another version relates that 'Ali also said, 'I heard the Prophet saying that the murderer of Ibn Safyah would dwell in hell. Give him the tidings of bottomless pit.'[22]

Differences and Dissensions among the Companions

The conflict among the Prophet's companions which ultimately led to hostilities needs to be reviewed dispassionately and coolly. It would not be fair to condemn those responsible for the discord as froward, worldly-minded or self-centered for this would mean arriving at a hasty decision without giving full thought to the events and circumstances. A historian has to analyse the situation and conditions connected with an event in an objective, impartial manner, consider the character of the persons who had a role in it and social conditions of the time. The complexity of any situation cannot also be properly understood without taking into account the emotional state of the

people It is not unoften that we make a mistake in delivering a verdict on happenings of the recent past simply because we sometimes fail to take a balanced view of the conditions and circumstances of such events. Therefore, it becomes all the more necessary to consider the circumstances, social conditions and motives and emotions of the people involved in any incident of the days bygone which were entirely different from our own. In such a case it would be essential to take a total view of the incident along with the religiousity and past services of the principal actors in the cause of Islam. The battle of Jamal was the outcome of a complex situation : a group was demanding punishment of the assassins of Uthmān while the other was finding itself unable to comply with this request. 'Ali representing the latter group, was placed in this predicament and had to bear the brunt of ensuing discord and hostilities.

Abul Bakhtari has been quoted by Abu Bakr that when 'Ali was asked whether the people who fought him at Jamal were polytheists, he replied : "They had already forsaken polytheism." He was again asked if they were hypocrites ? He replied, "Hypocrites seldom engage in the remembrance of Allah." 'Ali was again asked : "Then who were they ?" "They were," replied 'Ali, "my own brothers who had risen in revolt against me. I pray Allah that they and we, all of us, might be amongst those about whom God has said : *And We remove whatever rancour may be in their hearts*." A large number of reports have been handed down which show that those who participated in the battle of Jamal recanted from their earlier stand. A report related by 'Aisha on the authority of Zubayr, which has been confirmed by Abu Bakr and several others, says that Al-Hākim was told by Thaur b. Mujzāt that he found Talha, after the battle of Jamal, in the throes of death. Talha asked : ' To whose party do you belong ?" On being told that he was for 'Ali, Talha said, 'Stretch your hand so that I may take an oath of fealty on thy hand." He gave out his hand and Talha swore allegiance to 'Ali and gave up the ghost. When the incident was narrated before 'Ali, he remarked : "God is Great. The prediction made

by the Prophet came true. Allah did not like that Talha should enter paradise without swearing allegiance to me."[23]

Ibn Khaldūn the great philosopher-historian of Islam has correctly observed in his *Prolegomena* that :

> "Beware ! Do not think or speak ill of anyone of them. One ought to find some justification for each faction for they deserve to be rated highly by us. They differed on principle and rightfully fought the battle. All those who killed or were slain were fighting in the way of God for upholding truth and justice. Rather, I think that their differences were a blessing for the later generations so that everyone may choose anyone of them as his guide and Imām. Keep this in mind and try to understand the divine wisdom governing the world and the beings."[24]

Ibn Khaldūn further writes :

> "The doors of menace were wide-open (after the assassination of 'Uthmān). Every group was justified in taking the course it did, for each wanted the truth to prevail and further the cause of religion. None wanted that the religion should be put to any harm. Each reviewed the situation in this light and took a decision according to his understanding. Allah knows their situation as well as what was in their hearts. We deem all of them as virtuous, as proven by their own deeds and reports handed down by reliable witnesses."[25]

Ibn Khaldūn also says :

> "The stand taken by 'Ali in this dispute was undoubtedly correct yet no evil intention can be attributed to Mu'āwiyah also. He was well-intentioned but made a mistake. Thus both the groups were justified so far as their motives are concerned, but a peculiarity of the power is that one should wrest it for himself alone from others. It was not possible for Mu'āwiyah to give up this peculiarity either for himself or for his people. This was a natural trait strengthened by

one's own predilections and the support one gets from his family and tribe."[26]

The battle of Jamal was like a storm in the tea cup in which the outburst of excited feelings were subsided promptly but confrontation between 'Ali and Mu'āwiyah which followed it took the shape of a struggle between two precepts and differing viewpoints. It was a fratricidal war which resulted in heavy bloodshed.

War Between 'Ali and Mu'āwiyah

The year 36 A. H set in with Caliph 'Ali at the helm. He had even appointed governors for various regions among whom was also Sahl b. Hunayf who was to replace Mu'āwiyah as the governor of Syria. When Sahl reached Tabūk he was met by the cavalry of Mu'āwiyah and told that he would not be acceptable to the Syrians if he had not been appointed by 'Uthmān. Sahl asked them whether they were aware of the latest developments. They replied in affirmative but refused to acknowledge him as their chief. He accordingly returned to 'Ali.

Mu'āwiyah also sent an emissary to inform 'Ali that the people of Syria were adamant that the murderers of 'Uthmān should be punished. He also told 'Ali that when he left Damascus, the shirt of 'Uthmān was placed on the pulpit of the mosque where seventy thousand elderly persons were weeping and lamenting the martyrdom of 'Uthmān. Thereupon 'Ali exclaimed : 'O Lord ! Thou knowest that I have no hand in 'Uthmān's bloodshed.'

'Ali resolved to fight the Syrians and set out from Medina after appointing Qatham b. 'Abbās as the governor of the city, with the intention of fighting those who were flouting his authority. Hasan, son of 'Ali advised his father to desist from the fratricide since it was likely to result in a great carnage and drive a wadge between the Muslims. 'Ali, however, disregarded his advice[27] and started making preparations for the conflict.[28] But before he could take the road to Syria, he had to bend his

steps for the battle of Jamal described earlier.

'Ali left Basrah and arrived in Kūfa on 12th Rajab, 36/3rd January 657. There he was asked to stay in the White Palace built by Iranian Emperors but he refused since 'Umar had refused to put up there. He pitched his camp in an open ground and offered two rakats of prayer in the chief mosque of the city. He delivered a sermon in which he commanded the good and forbade evil. Thereafter he sent a letter to Mu'āwiyah through Jarīr b. Abdullāh in which he wrote.

> "Those who swore allegiance to Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān have sworn allegiance to me on the same basis on which they swore allegiance to them. He who was present has no other choice and he who was absent has no right to reject; and consultation is confined to Muhājirs and Ansārs. If they agree on an individual and take him to be Caliph, it would be deemed to mean Allah's pleasure. If any one keeps out by way of objection or innovation he would be returned to the position from where he kept out. If he refuses he would be fought for following a course other than that of the believers and Allah would put him back from where he had run away."[29]

Battle of Siffīn

'Ali set out from Kūfa with the intention of inveding Syria. Mu'āwiyah, on the other hand, collected his forces and headed towards Siffin[30] on the Euphrates for it was the route to be taken by 'Ali. 'Ali despatched a vanguard under Ushtar al-Nakha'i with strict instructions not to attack the enemy first but to invite it to swear allegiance to him. Ushtar Nakha'i followed the directions scrupulously for three days; his contingents stood face to face with the enemy but there was no fighting except minor skirmishes. In the meantime 'Ali himself reached the battlefield. Mu'āwiyah had already brought his forces to the front. Initially there was some fighting over the water courses taken by the Syrians under their control and closed by them to the Iraqis.

Ultimately, the two parties reached a settlement that both the parties will have free access to the water courses.

'Ali than sent a few of his officers to advise Mu'āwiyah to render allegiance to him but Mu'āwiyah insisted that the murderers of 'Uthmān should first be dealt with. A desultory fighting continued for a month but with the opening of the new year, the 37th of the Hijra, a truce was agreed upon for the month of Muharram in the hope that the interlude might be helpful in averting the clash of arms. The month was spent in exchange of deputations between the two parties but no settlement could be reached. At last both the armies were drawn in full array and hotilities were renewed. 'Ali, however, gave directions to his men that they would not begin the fighting, no wounded person would be killed, no woman would be attacked or insulted nor anybody would imprecate upon the chiefs of the opposing army. For a week the fighting was desultory as before but it became increasingly severe. Both the armies fought during the day and separated in the night to renew it next morning with greater vigour. Feats of bravery were displayed by both the armies and many men of rank were slain. 'Ammār b. Yāsir was slain by the Syrians which, as Ibn Kathīr says, demonstrated that 'Ali was in the right.[31]

The fighting continued in this wise until Friday, when 'Ali's forces were about to have the upper hand. The Syrian army then raised the sacred scrolls aloft on the point of lances and started shouting; 'The Book of the Lord. Let it decide between us !'[32] They argued that if all of them were to die fighting, who would defend the Islamic realm, who would fight in the way of God and who would defeat the infidels and polytheists. Witnessing the Scripture held aloft the Iraqis also said that they accepted the Book and its judgement. At the same time, Mus'yir b. Fidki, a man from the tribe of Tamīm, Zayd b. Husain of Tayy (alias al-Sabāi) and a number of others including some *qurra*, the reciters of the Quran, said in unison, 'O Ali, agree to the judgement of Book of God. If you reject, we would hand you over to the enemy or, deal with you in the

manner we treated Ibn 'Affān. 'Ali expostulated with his men. He pleaded to continue the fight since it was a ruse to avoid defeat. Ushtur al-Nakha'i also tried to reason with them but to no avail. The Syrians and Iraqis ceased fighting and protracted negotiations ensued which brought the two parties to agree on referring the matter for arbitration. It was decided that the matter of appointment of Caliph should be left to the decision of two umpiress—one each to be appointed by 'Ali and Mu'awiyah. Mu'awiyah nominated 'Amr b. al-Aas while 'Ali wanted to appoint 'Abdullah b. 'Abbas but the *qurra* persisted on the nomination of Abu Musā al-Ash'ari.

Arbitration

Abu Musā al-Ash'ari was summoned from his house. When the news of accord was broken to him, he said, 'Praise be to God,' but when he was told that he was to act as an arbiter, he added : 'To God we belong and unto Him do we return.'

An agreement[33] signed by 'Ali and Mua'wiyah bound them to accept the decision of the umpires to whom guarantee was given for the safety of their person and families by both the parties. It was also agreed that their decision would be accepted by the entire nation of Islam.

Emergence of Khārijites

The agreement was read out to the people of Bani Tamīm by Ash'ath b. Qays. 'Urwa b. Uzīna immediately sprang up on his feet to say : 'Do you appoint arbiters in the religion of God ?' The hint dropped by 'Urwa was seized upon by a number of *qurras* among the supporters of 'Ali and they began to shout : 'Judgement belongs to God alone.' That is how the schism of the sect known as Kharijites came into existence and the saying became their article of faith.

As 'Ali returned to Kūfa, a body of 12,000 men fell out from his army ranks and withdrew to a place called Harūra.[34] Their secession gave them the name 'Khawārij', that is, those who went out. 'Ali sent 'Abdullah b. 'Abbas to them who

succeeded in bringing back some of them who recanted their views but the majority remained firm on its stand. They agreed among themselves to be strict in commanding the good and forbidding the evil but vigorously protested to 'Ali against the setting up of a human tribunal above the divine word.

Ibn Jarīr has related that once when 'Ali was delivering a sermon, a Kharijite stood up and said, 'O 'Ali, you have associated people with the religion of God although judgement belongs to God alone.' At once those present there began shouting : 'Judgement belongs to God alone.' 'Ali replied : 'What you say is correct but the interpretation you are putting upon it and intention of those repeating it is wrong.' Thereafter those people deserted Kūfa and settled in Nahrwan.

Decision of the Umpires

The two umpires, Abu Mūsa and 'Amr met at Dumatul Jundal during the month of Ramadhan. 'Amr pressed Abu Mūsa to accept Mu'awiyah as the Caliph, but the latter disagreed. After considering a few other names they agreed that in view of the turn of events it would be in the interest of the Muslims to depose both 'Ali and Mu'awiyah and then leave it to the people to elect someone else as the Caliph.

'Amr asked Abu Mūsa to announce the decision before the people who had assembled to hear them. Abu Mūsa stood up and said, 'We have given thought to the affairs of the Muslims and found that nothing will be more helpful in restoring peace and concord amongst the people than to depose both 'Ali and Mu'awiyah. After that your elders shall choose a man to take their place. Therefore, I depose 'Ali and Mu'awiyah both.' He stepped aside and 'Amr came forward 'You have heard the judgement of Abu Mūsa,' he said, 'he has deposed his claimant. I, too, depose him and appoint my claimant Mū'awiyah for he is the heir of 'Uthman, an avenger of his blood and most entitled to succeed him.' Thereupon Abu Mūsa and 'Amr exchanged hot words, but Abu Mūsa felt so ashamed and disgusted that he immediately left the place for Makkah.[34]

Kharijites, on the other hand, gained strength. They got so infuriated that one of their leaders threatened 'Ali that if he submitted to arbitration in the matter of Allah's Book, they would fight him for the sake of winning the pleasure of God. They assembled in the house of 'Abdullah b. Wahb al-Rāsibi who made a harangue urging the people to lead a life of virtue and prepare for the hereafter. He asked them to command the good and forbid the evil and condemned all other people as transgressors. He also implored the Kharijites to leave the place for taking up residence in some cavity of the hills or to go to Madain so as to overpower the city and live there according to their tenets. They accordingly left the place leaving their kith and kin under the delusion of betaking the path of virtue.[35]

Arbitration

It would be appropriate to cite here the observations of Al-'Aqqad about the circumstances in which 'Ali had to accept the proposal of arbitration since it will help us to understand the extremist view taken by the Kharijites. Al-'Aqqad writes in the *Al-'Abqariyāt al-Islāmiyah* :

> 'Those who had condemned 'Ali for accepting the arbitration had, in my opinion acted impetuously. Had 'Ali refused arbitration they would have promptly criticized him with the same fervour and insisted upon its acceptance because 'Ali had not agreed to it willingly but in the circumstances in which he had no other choice. He gave assent to it when his forces had declined to fight and were about to group themselves in two contending factions, one in favour of arbitration and the other against it, and to start fighting with one another.
>
> 'The historians who approve 'Ali's action in accepting the arbitration but disapprove his nomination of Abu Mūsa Ash'ari, whose weakness and indecisiveness was known to 'Ali, forget that Abu Mūsa was imposed on him precisely in the same way as he was forced to agree to

arbitration. An even more important fact that is usually lost sight of is that 'Amr b. al-'Aas would have never agreed to depose Mu'awiyah no matter who among Abu Mūsa Ash'ari, Ushtur al-Nakhai and 'Abdullah b. 'Abbas had represented 'Ali. Nor would have 'Amr b. al-'Aas consented to the caliphate of 'Ali with the result that both the umpires would have remained adamant and the matter would have ended almost in the same way as it did. Thus, a critical appraisal of history leads to the conclusion that the best choice for 'Ali was the course he had adopted whether by mistake or knowing that the result of either alternatives would be the same."[35]

Khārijites and Sabāites

It appears necessary to describe here the Kharijites and Sabaite sects which became a source of great trouble to 'Ali. Only God knows why 'Ali had to face these ordeals. These exasperating problems had perhaps been destined to enable 'Ali to demonstrate his unusual talents and brilliance.

Khārijites

The Kharijites were instinctively simpletions who took every word literally, had a negative attitude and their puritanism was marked by an extremism which failed to see contradiction in the application of their principles.

They had been conscripted into 'Ali's army and mostly belonged to the tribe of Tamīm. They revolted against 'Ali for submitting to the decision of a human tribunal in a matter pertaining to the Book of God but ultimately came to believe that every arbitration was a sin since the commandments of God were self-evident. They argued that referring any matter for arbitration meant that there was a doubt about the correctness of the issues referred for a decision. Their annoyance on the point found expression in the adage: "Judgement belongs to God alone," which was readily accepted by them as a principle denoting

their self-righteousness. They also liked to call themselves as *al-shūrāt*, that is, those who had sold their lives to God, taking the expression from the Quranic verse : "And of the mankind is he who would sell himself, seeking the pleasure of Allah."[37] 'Ali fought them at Nahrawan where a large number of them were slain. Their defeat incressed their aversion to 'Ali to the extent that they intrigued against him and ultimately 'Abdur Rahman b. Muljam assassinated him. Their Bedouin simplicity and equalitarian attitude had a strong appeal for the non-Arab converts to Islam. Extremists both in their virtues and vices, they very often differed from their leaders and were predisposed to groupism on trivial issues. Being narrow-minded they were extremely intolerant of all opposition. At the same time, they were brave, frank and straightforward, and easily placed their life at stake for their beliefs. They never took even a date without first obtaining the permission of its owner but were ever willing to perpetrate any crime against Muslims not subscribing to their doctrines. 'Abdur Rahman b Muljam was reciting the Qur'an while he stabbed 'Ali to death by his dagger. He was all in a flutter when told that his tongue would be severed. Enquired about the reason of his nervousness, he replied, "I do not want to live in this world like a deadman (*i. e.*, not being able to recite the Qur'an). A writer has aptly observed that :

> "These are the youngmen who look old in their youth; their eyes are downcast before evil; and their steps heavy in going to vice. They are lean because of excessive prayers and pale and feeble due to frequent vigils."[38]

Sabāites

Al-'Aqqad writes about this sect :

> "Sabaites are the followers of 'Abdullah b. Saba who was also known as Ibn Sauda. A Jew from Yemen, he was born to a negress His faith, called by some as the eclectic creed, was a combination of different

> doctrines. One of it was the Jewish belief that a saviour will be born in line of David; another was taken from the Hindus that God reincarnates Himself in a human form; the third was the Christian belief that Jesus Christ will come to the world again, and the fourth embraced the ancient Persian thought that the descendents of nobles and grandees have a sacred blood in their veins."[39]

Al-'Aqqad further says :

> "Sabaiam was born in Yemen where its adherents ruled for sometime. The Sabaites exaggerated their devotion to 'Ali and ascribed divinity to him. In Egypt and Iran the seeds of Fatimide and Imamite sects of the Shi'as were sown and nourished until their shoots sprouted after a few generations."[40]

The *Rijāl Kashi* is the most authoritative biographical dictionary of the Shi'ite sect. It says about 'Abdullah b. Saba that :

> "He was the first man to declare the essentiality of belief in the Imamate of 'Ali and disavowed his enemies, declaimed against them and proclaimed them as disbelievers. The charge levelled against Shi'ite faith by its adversaries that its source lies in Judaism, is on account of him."[41]

'Abdullah b. Saba and his followers elevated 'Ali; they first equated him with the prophets of God and then promoted him to divinity. He started preaching this strange and startling doctrines among the people in Kūfa. When 'Ali was informed of his beliefs, he first ordered to consign him and his followers to flames in two pits but later on banished them to the vicinity of Madain. After 'Ali was assassinated, Ibn Saba declared that 'Ali could not die and that he had gone to the sky like Jesus Christ. Some Sabaites hold the view that 'Ali is concealed in the clouds and the crash of thunder is in fact his voice. They greet 'Ali with the words 'Peace be on you, O Commander of the faithful' on hearing the roar of thunder. When Ibn Saba was informed that 'Ali had been martyred, he replied, "We will

not believe it even if you bring his brain in a bag. He will not die till he has descended from the sky, and he will establish his kingdom over the world before his death.'[42]

There has perhaps been no other movement based on intrigue and machination which has, as far as the writer of these lines is aware, so successfully thrived after the death of its founder.

The intellectual and functional framework of Ibn Saba is made of several conspicuous elements. Ibn Saba's psychological and religious traits and family features are clearly discernible in his creed. His followers prefer heavy going to smooth sailing and furtiveness to clarity. The Qur'an refers to this way of thought and inclination of the people of Saba by citing those who say : 'Our Lord ! Make the stage between our journeys longer.'[43] This phrase divulges the recial lineament of 'Abdullah b. Saba which lingerd on for a long time in succeeding generations. Ibn Saba's mental state also shows traces of inferiority complex which he inherited from his negress mother, and after whom he was called Ibn Sauda. The doctrines formulated by him reflect his Jewish legacy. All through history the followers of Judaism have tended to be destructive, have exerted baneful influence, damaged healthy traditions of literature and culture, corrupted the morals, and stimulated clandestine and conspiratorial activities.[44] 'Ali's relationship with the Prophet, his august and sublime character and brilliance of his head and heart proved helpful to enlist supporters for this secretive movement.

The two sects diametrically opposed in their concepts and convictions really marked the fulfilment of a prophecy by the Prophet of Islam. A number of narrators have reported on the authority af Hārith b. Husayra, who was told by Abu Sādiq that 'Ali once said to Rabī'a b. al-Nājid :

> "The Prophet on whom be peace and blessings, one day sent for me and said, 'You are akin to Jesus son of Mary. The Jews became so malicious towards him that they charged his mother with a calumny while Christians adored him so ardently that they elevated

him to a position not occupied by him.' 'Ali continued : 'Lo ! two groups shall meet their doom on account of enlarging or depreciating my personality : my admirers exaggerating me and attributing merits which I do not possess; and those bearing malice towards me will incite others to malign me. Hearken ! I am neither a prophet nor I receive revelations but I follow the Book and the *sunnah* to the best of my ability. It is incumbent on you to obey me in whatever I command for the obedience of God, whether you like it or not."[45]

Example set by 'Ali

All-knowing God knew that the community He had commissioned with the moral trusteeship of the world and which was to provide religious and ethical standard for guidance of all peoples and nations would have to come across all vicissitudes of human existence; often its members would be faithful and obedient, sometimes rebellions; there would be external aggressions as well as internal espionages, for all these were natural to human beings. It was therefore given specific instructions for different occasions, and conditions were created for its leaders to provide a practical example for varied occasions, so that the followers of Islam may not grope in the dark on a new situation arising amidst them.

Dissension within the ranks of the Muslims and revolt against the rightful leader of the community, howsoever distasteful, was thus a situation as much inevitable as war against the infidels and apostates. Such a state of affairs required an example to be set by a righteous leader of the earliest generation of Muslims so that the community may follow in his footsteps in the ages to come.

Sufyan b. 'Uaina, an eminent successor of the Prophet's companions, has expressed this reality cogently in these words :

' God conferred the Prophet with four sets of swords.

"One of it was with which he fought the idolaters. The

other was which Abu Bakr faced the apostates for God had commanded : *Fight them until they surrender.*"

"The other sword was with 'Umar with which he subdued the Megians and People of the Book since God had ordered : *Fight against such of those who have been given the Scripture as believe not in Allah......*

"Yet another sword was with 'Ali with which he faced those who rebelled and exceeded the bounds for God had said : *Fight ye that which doeth wrong till it returns upto the ordinance of Allah.*"[46]

Abu Hanīfa, the great jurist, has said :

" 'Ali was justified in fighting those whom he had to face and had he not done so Muslims would have never known what course was to be adopted in the case of dissension among the Muslims."[47]

Notes and References :—

1. There is a difference of opinion among the historian about the day on which the martyrdom of 'Uthman took place. Some say that it was the 19th of Dhil Hijja (18 nights of Dhil Hijja had passed already), and this is what is held commonly. Others, however, are of the view that the tragedy occurred during the period *haj* is performed, as claimed by Ibn Jarir. There are also some who say that it was Friday, after three days of Dhil Hijja had passed, while a few like Ibn Asakir, claim that the calamitous day was the 10th of Dhil Hijja on which sacrifices are offered. (*Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah, op. cit.* Vol. VII, p. 19.)
2. *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VII, pp. 226-27
3. *Ibid*, pp. 227-28 (Q. 8 : 26)
4. *Al-'Abqariyāt al-Islāmiyah, op. cit.*, p. 880
5. *Ibid*, p. 885
6. *Ibid*, p. 924
7. *Ibid*, p. 924
8. Ibn Hajar, *At-Isābah fi Tamīz is-Sahābah, op. cit.*, p. 508

   Muhammad Sāleh al-Gharsi writes in the *Fasl al-Khattāb fi Mawāqif al-Ashāb* that when Mu'āwiyah gained complete hold over the government, he adopted the same line of action as 'Ali for it was not possible for him to punish anyone in the absence of legal evidence. (p. 123).

9. The city was founded by S'ad b. Waqqās after the battle of Qadisia. Several scholars of law, hadith and grammer rose in that city and the 'Abbāids also made it their capital before they shifted to Baghdād.
10. *Al-'Abqariāt al-Islāmiyah*, op. cit., p. 952
11. *Al Bidāyah wan Nihāyah, op. cit*, Vol. VII, p. 228
12. Sahl b. Hunayf b. Wahab al-Ansari al-Awsi, known as Abu S'ad, was one of the earliest Muslims of Medina and a companion of the Prophet. He had fought in all the battles including Badr and Uhad and a brotherhood was established between him and 'Ali by the Prophet. He was appointed governor of Basra by 'Ali after the battle of Jamal and then governor of Syria in the place of Muawiyah. He also took part in the battle of Siffin and died in 38 A.H. at Kufa. His funeral prayer was led by 'Ali. Forty reports handed down by him find a place in *hadith* collections. (Zarkali, *Al-'Ālem*, Beirut, 1969, Vol. VIII, p. 3).
13. The battle was named *Jamal* as Āisha had been present in the battle-field in the litter of her camel. A number of scholars have held that 'Āisha had set out to bring about peace between the two parties, but two Arab tribes Banu Dhabbah and Banu Azd, did not listen to her and attacked the forces of 'Ali. These two tribes were, therefore, responsible for the battle of Jamal. ['Abdul Qāhir Baghdādi (d. 429), A.H. *Usūl al-Dīn*, Intanbul, 1346 A.H].
14. Ibn S'ad, *Al-Tabaqāt al Kubrā, op. cit.* Vol. III. p. 31-32.
15. *Al-Bidāyah wan Nihāyah*, Vol. VII, p. 245.
16. Dhahabi, Shams-ud-din Muhammad b. Ahmad, *Sharh Ma'ani al-Athār*, Deoband, Vol. II, P. 102.
17. *Al-Bidayāh wan-Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VII, pp 246-47.
18. See S. Sulaimān Nadw's *Seerat-i-'Āisha* for further details.
19. M. Al-Khazri Bak, *Mahadharat Tārīkh al-Umam al-Islāmiyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 58.
20. *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p 242.
21. *Ibid*, p. 248.
22. *Ibid*, p. 250.
23. Waliullah Shah, *Izālat al-Khifa*, p. 280.
24. Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddamah*, Cairo, p. 172.
25. *Ibid*, p. 171.
26. *Ibid*, p. 162.
27. 'Ali had taken the stand that the authority and prestige of the Caliph must be vindicated. This was exactly the same attitude as taken by 'Uthmān during the blockade and his refusal to abdicate. Acquiescence of any caliph to unreasonable demands of insurgents for fear of difference among the Muslims or a real or imaginary danger would

have led to losing the confidence of the people reposed in him.

28. *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah, op cit.*, Vol. VII, pp 229-30.
29. *Nahjul Balāghah, op. cit*, letter No. 6, p. 393. The letter has been quoted by other historians also.
30. Siffin is situate on the west bank of Enphrates, near Ricca although some consider it to be located on the eastern bank of the river.
31. The Prophet had predicated, as reported by several narrators, that 'Ammar b. Yāsir would be killed by a group of the rebels. *Al-Isābah fi-Tamīz is-Sahābah, op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 513.
32. Ibn Jarir and other historians have stated that the stratagem was devised by Amr b. Al-'Aas.
33. *Al-Bidāyan wan-Nihāyah*, Vol. VIII, p. 277.
34. Khārijites are also known as Harūri, after the name of this place.
35. *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah, op. cit.* Vol. VII, p. 276-77. Qazi Abu Bakr b. al-'Arabi had rejected this report as inuthentic. He says that reliable reports establish that Abu Mūsa and 'Amr simply agreed to depose 'Ali and Mu'āwiyah and left the matter to the decision of elder companions who had been close to the Prophet to elect another Caliph. (*Al-'Awāsim min-al-Qawāsim*, Cairo, 1371 A H. pp. 172-180).
36. *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VII, pp. 276-87.
37. *Al-'Abqariyāt al-Islāmiyah, op. cit.*, pp. 925-26.
38. Q. 2 : 207.
39. *Alkāmil, op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 136.
40. *Al-Abqariāt al-Islāmiyah, op. cit.*, p. 971.
41. Al-Kashi, Abu 'Amr Muhammad b. Umar 'Abdul 'Aziz, *Rijāl Kashi*, Bombay, 1317 A.H. p. 71.
42. Muhammad Farid Wajdi, *'Dāiratul Ma'ārif al-Qarn al-'Ashrayn*, Beirut, 1971.
43. Q. 34 : 19.
44. One can refer to the Protocols of the Elders of Zion (Kuwait. n.d.) to see these characteristics of the Jews.
45. *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 356.
46. Sarkashi, *Al-Mabsūt*, Vol. X, p. 2.
47. Muwaffiq ibn Ahmad 'al-Makki, *Manāqib al-Imām al-'Āzam*, Hyderabad, 1321 A H. Vol. II, p. 83.

VII

ALI FACES KHARIJITES AND THE SYRIANS

The Kharijites and the Syrians

'Ali was confronted with several perplexing problems all together. On the one hand Syrians were strengthening their position and, on the other, 'Ali's supporters and followers, divided and disheartened, lacked the spirit and keenness to fight under his banner. Differing historical and psychological causes and the predisposition of the two peoples following 'Ali and Mu'āwiyah were at the bottom of their divergent attitudes.

The two countries had been subjected to different historical influences which had permeated deep and got entrenched by tradition. Ummiyah, the great grandfather of Mu'āwiyah had migrated to Syria on account of his differences with his brother Hāshim, where he remained for a considerably long time. His grandson Abu Sufyan had been charged with the responsibility of making security arrangements for the trade caravans of Makkah during the pre-Islamic period, which had afforded him an opportunity to make frequent trips to that country and develop relations with the people there. This was the reason why Abu Sufyan was presented before Heraclius when he desired to know more about the Prophet who had sent a letter inviting the emperor to Islam. The incident has been mentioned by Bukāri

and all the biographers of the Prophet, and also referred to in the earlier pages.[1]

Apart from it Syria had been ruled for a long time by Yazīd b. Abu Sufyan and his brother Mu'āwiyah b. Abu Sufyan [2] In the pre-Islamic times the country was a part of the Byzantian Empire. Its administrative set up had always been marked by stability. Mu'āwiyah, too, was known for his administrative capacity among his compatriots. He combined the qualities of elegance and graciousness, political tact aud imperious mannerism. He kept his subjects contented both by his magnanimity and as a stern taskmaster and knew what attitude was to be adopted in the given circumstances.

As for Iraq, it had been a vassal state of Persia's Sassanid and Kiyāni rulers for several centuries. The country had passed through long periods of anarchy and instability, and seen frequent change of the sovereigns who often held the reins of government for very brief periods. Anushirwān (531-579) was succeeded by Hormisdas IV (579-589) but was deposed and murdered. After him Khusru Pervīz (589-628) wielded the scepter as Chosroes II, but after suffering a defeat at the hands of Heraclius he was also deposed and killed by Cyrus and Sirves. The latter ascended the throne as Kubād II, but died within six months. Then followed a period of anarchy in which ten monarchs aspired to the Sassanian throne within a short spell of four years (629-634) and perished almost immediately. At last Yazdgird III (634-642) was made emperor who proved to be the last king of Persia. Chaos and confusion was so rife in the country that the people consented to have Purāndukht, daughter of Khusru Pervīz, as their monarch for a year and four months against the traditions of Persia.

The people of Iraq and Syria had also a different disposition due to the divergent frame of mind of the Arabian tribes taking up residence in these two countries. Most of the tribes which had conquered and settled in Syria belonged to northern and western Arabia. They were amenable to law and order and an orderly form of existence. The conquerors of Iraq were unruly

tribes of eastern Arabia which were irascible, impatient and impulsive. These were the people who had in the recent past raised the banner of revolt against Islam in the form of apostasy and non-payment of poor-due. At the same time, they were possessed of valour and other tribal characteristics of the Arabs.

Dr. Ahmad Amīn writes about the people of Iraq :

> "From the times immemorial Iraq had been the abode of different religions and uncommon creeds. The doctrines of Mani, Mazdak and Ibn Daisān had gained popularity in this region and Judaism and Christianity had also made a foothold there. The people there had been aware of different beliefs of which one was that certain persons are incarnations of God."[3]

Another scholar Ahmad Hasan Zayyāt says :

> "The Arabs who migrated to Iraq came with their Yemeni and Nazari prejudices. In the regions adjoining Euphrates either Christian or Khārijite doctrines had flourished because it was the abode of the Rabī'a tribes which, as Asma'i says, were the source of every tumult."[4]

The conflicting features of the troops of 'Ali and Mu'āwiyah have been brought out distinctly by 'Abbas Mahmūd al-'Aqqad who says :

> "It is surprising yet a historical fact that the two armies had antithetical characteristics. One was perfectly disciplined and collectively willing to further enhance and strengthen it; the other averse to every form of regimentation and inclined to break discipline or rather it was a conglomeration of unruly men."

'Aqqad says further :

> "The former which was well-disciplined was with Mu'āwiyah arround Syria. The latter which abhored discipline was with 'Ali, drawn from different areas and ethnic groups of Arabian Peninsula.'[5]

'Ali made preparations for attacking Syria but the Khārijites refused to obey him. He led a strong force from Kūfa to

Nakhīlah where he delivered a stirring speech urging the troops to fight the enemy and remain steadfast in the battle. Before he could move forward, he got the news that the Kharijites had raised the banner of insurrection, they were killing and looting the people indiscriminately, means of communication had been cut off and gruesome outrages were being committed by them.

'Ali deputed an emissary to negotiate with them, but they did not allow him to say anything and killed him instantly. On being informed of the situation 'Ali considered it necessary to deal with them before advancing towards Syria. He went to Khārijites, exhorted and admonished them, saying: 'You disobeyed me (in the matter of arbitration) although you had suggested it first. I advised you against it, but you declined.' The Kharijites, instead of listening to him, arrayed themeleves against him and started shouting: 'Judgement is for God alone. Make haste to Paradise! Make haste to Paradise!' Some of them even brandished their lances and arrows to fight him. Left with no option, 'Ali engaged them in a fight and defeated them in 37/657.[6]

Disobedience of Iraqis

Coming back from Nahrawān after defeating the Khārijites, 'Ali assembled his troops and delivered a speech before them. He said: 'God has made you victorious, therefore it is the right time to deal with your Syrian enemies.' But the Iraqis replied: 'O Commander of the faithful, let us return for a while to our homes to furbish up our lances and swords and replenish our quivers which have all been dulled and exhausted.'[7]

The attitude of Iraqis remained sullen and petulant. Ibn Jarīr says that when 'Ali noticed their apathy and unwillingness to fight, he exhorted and reproached them, cited the Quranic commandments for waging war and urged them to take the field against the enemy, but they continued to obstruct him. They did not move out of their station and some even deserted him. 'Ali had perforce to return to Kūfa.

It was now 39/660. Mu'āwiyah recruited a large army and sent his men to the provinces under 'Ali. Mu'āwiyah was aware

that the Iraqis were indisciplined and flouted 'Ali's orders. He attacked 'Ain-al-Tamar, Al-Anbār, Taima and Tadmūr. These attacks created a sense of insecurity and weakness among the Iraqis and other adherents of 'Ali.

A speech delivered by 'Ali on this occasion depicts the hesitant and weak-kneed attitude of the Iraqi forces. 'Ali came to know that an army of Mu'āwiyah had attacked Anbār and slain its governor Hassān b. Hassān. He came out of his house, annoyed and furious, a part of his wrapping touching the ground. He made straight for Nakhīla, a number of persons following him. Ascending a hillock, he first praised God and invoked blessings for the Prophet. Thereafter he delivered this historic address which shows the feelings of a leader who felt aggrieved by the attitude of his own adherents. The oration registers the righteousness of 'Ali's cause and his irritation on being disobeyed by his forces. The address delivered by 'Ali combines literary excellence with the command and ease of a flowing oration.

> "Jihād is one of the doors of Paradise. Whoever abandons it Allah covers him with the dress of disgrace and distress. Contempt and scorn become his fate. Beware! I called you to fight these people night and day, secretly and openly, and exhorted you to attack them before they attacked you. And, by God who has my life in His possession, the people who are attacked in their own houses have always to suffer disgrace. But you put it off and remained sitting indolently. You found it irksome to accept my advice and disobeyed me until a series of attacks were mounted against you. The people of Ghāmid attacked Al-Anbār and killed its governor Hassān b. Hassān. Many more men and women were slain. I have come to know that every one of them entered upon Muslim women and the women under protection of Islam, and took away their ornaments from their legs, arms, necks and ears without any resistance. Then they got back laden with wealth without getting even a scratch. If any Muslim

dies of grief after all this he is not to be blamed, but, I think, should rather be praised. How strange ! It is enough to deaden one's heart, and confound the mind and crush one with grief. They are so united on what is wrong and you are so divided being on the right. Disunity and cowardice has taken hold of you. Arrows are shot at you but you do not get back at them; you are attacked but you do not strike back ! Allah is being disobeyed before you and you remain a silent spectator. When you are asked to move against them in winter you say it is severely cold; if I ask you to march in summer you say it is too hot. Spare us till heat subsides from us. By God, if you run away from heat and cold, you would be running away faster from the sword. O you semblance of men ! but not men in fact; you are fantastic in your imagination; you have the wit of women. By God, your disobedience has made my plans futile, filled my bosom with rage and now the Quraish have started saying that the son of Abu Tālib is brave but ignorant of the tactics of war. Allah bless them. Is there anyone who is adept in the game of war more than me. Allah knows it that I rose for it although I was not yet twenty, and here I am, having crossed sixty. But he can do nothing whose orders are not obeyed, howsoever wise he may be. (He repeated the last sentence thrice)."[8]

Martyrdom of 'Ali

Ibn Kathīr has given the following account of the last days of 'Ali.

"The Commander of the faithful felt very much disgusted by the prevailing conditions. His army was indiscipli-ned and unruly. The people of Iraq also started de-fying him and withdrew their cooperation. Syrians, on the other hand, were gaining strength and making raids on his territories. The ruler of Iraq, 'Ali b. Abi

> Tālib, was the most virtuous man then living on this earth, the most worshipful, the most selfless, the most learned and the most God-conscious, yet he was forsaken by all. A stage came when the commander of the faithful seemed to be fed up with his life, he wished to die and say (pointing to his beard) 'This will be dyed with its (head's) blood.' And this is what ultimately happened."[9]

The unfortunate assassination of 'Ali was the sequel of Khārijite intrigue. Three of them, 'Abdur Rahman b. 'Amr also known as Ibn Muljam, Burak b. 'Abdullah al-Tamīmi and 'Amr b. Bakr al-Tamīmi, met in secret to discuss the killing of their comrades at Nahrawān by 'Ali. They prayed for the salvation of their souls and then conferred with one another that if they could kill the leaders of the armies engaged in the internecine war by placing their own lives at stake, they would be able to save the country and also avenge the murder of their brothers. Ibn Muljam undertook the responsibility of killing 'Ali, Burak of Mu'āwiyah and 'Amr b. Bakr of doing away 'Amr b. al-'Aas. They swore to kill the man assigned to each or perish in the attempt. They dipped their swords in poison and decided that each should be in his place in the night of 17th Ramadhan where he had to carry out his nefarious plan.

Ibn Muljam went to Kūfa and did not reveal his plan even to the Khārijites there. On Friday night, the 17th of Ramadhān, he took his seat under the porch by which 'Ali used to go to the mosque. 'Ali came out for pre-dawn prayer and as he was calling out others to get up, Ibn Muljam struck him on the head raising the slogan, ' Command is for God alone neither it is yours nor of your companions." 'Ali's beard got red with his blood. He called out to lay hold of the culprit who was immediately captured. 'Ali asked J'ade b. Hubayra b. Abi Wahb to lead the prayer. He was carried inside the house. He said, 'He shall be slain if I die, but if I alive I know what to do with him.'[10] When Ibn Muljam was brought to him, he gave the direction : 'Keep him in your custody and treat him fairly. If I

remain alive, I will decide what to do with him; to forgive him or to take my revenge. But if I die, the requital is a life for a life, but do not mutilate him "[11]

At the end of a lengthy testament to his sons Hasan and Husain, 'Ali said :

> "O sons of 'Abdul Muttalib, do not shed the blood of Muslims aimlessly and do not kill anybody save my assassin. Listen! If I die by this single stroke, you should also strike him once. Do not mutilate him for I have heard the Prophet forbidding mutilation of any living being after killing it, even if it be a barking dog."[12]

Jundab b 'Abdullah asked 'Ali, 'O Commander of the faithful, should we swear allegiance to Hasan in your place.' 'Ali replied, 'I do not command it, nor do I forbid you.'

It is reported that the words uttered last by 'Ali were ; "And whoso doeth good an atom's weight will see it then, and whoso doeth ill an atom's weight will see it then.[13]

'Ali bade his sons to inculcate awe of God and remain righteous. He also dictated his last will.[14]

Ibn Muljam said after he had been arrested : "I have made a thrust at him which would be enough to kill the entire population of this city. By God, I had poisoned my sword for a month: purchased it for a thousand *dirham* and spent another thousand in poisoning it.'

'Ali passed away[15] on Friday, early in the morning of 17th Ramadhan 40/24th January 661 at the age of 63, after occupying the seat of Caliph for 4 years and nine months. His funeral prayer was led by Hasan and he was buried within the state headquarter at Kūfa, since it was apprehended that the Khārijites might try to exhume his dead body.[16]

Example set by 'Ali

God Almighty is aware both of the past and the future. He has in His wisdom entrusted the trusteeship of spiritual-moral norms and standards of the world to the nation of Islam

which will, inevitably, have to put up with different contingencies, its own people abiding by the commandments of God and sometimes flouting them war and peace and internal dissensions and anarchy. He had 'therefore' given specific directions to meet different situations and also enabled it to be guided by the examples set by different godly souls, those who were elects and virtuous, so that the subsequent generations do not grope in the dark in cases of difficulties and stress.

In the way the followers of the last Prophet had to wage war, against the worshippers of false gods and those who had corrupted the earlier revelations, they had also to suppress apostasy and face other painful and tragic situations like revolt and extremism within their own ranks. Its adherents had 'therefore' to be aware of the course adopted in such situations by the companions of the Prophet. It was this fact which found expression in these words of an eminent *tābe'yee*[17] Sufyan b. 'Uainah : 'Allah had bestowed four types of swords upon the Prophet. One of it was that with which Muslims fought the idolaters; the second was with which Abu Bakr Siddīq faced the apostates, for God had said : *Fight them until they accept Islam*; the third was with which 'Umar Farooq waged war against the people of the Book since God had commanded : *Fight those who do not believe in God*: and the forth was with which Saiyadana 'Ali dealt with the rebels, frowards and the extemists."[18]

Abu Hanīfa, the great jurist, is on record that " 'Ali fought only those against whom he had the rightful claim. Had 'Ali not taken that course, nobody would have known how to solve the problem in case of schism raising its head within Islam."[19]

'Ali's Offsprings

'Ali had two sons, Hasan and Husain by his first wife Fāitma. Another son whose name was Muhsin is also reported to have been born to Fātima but he died in infancy. 'Ali had also too daughters by her, Zaynab al-Kubra and Umm Kulthūm, the latter being married to 'Umar as stated earlier.

The progeny of 'Ali from his other wives was as detailed

below:

'Abbas, Ja'afar, 'Abdullah and 'Uthman were born to Umm al-Banīn bint Hazām.

Laila bint Mas'ud gave birth to Ubeydullah and Abu Bakr.

Muhammad Asghar and Yahya from another wife Asma' bint 'Umays.

A son and daughter, 'Umar and Ruqaiya, were born to Sahba bint Rabī'a also known as Jāriyah.

Umāmah bint Abul 'Aas was another wife who was grand-daughter of the Prophet, being the daughter of Zaynab. Muhammad Awsat was born to her from 'Ali

Muhammad Akbar from Khaulah bint J'afar. He was also known as Muhammad b. al-Hanafīyah.

Sa'eed bint 'Urwah gave birth to three daughters, Umm-ul-Hasan, Milat al-Kubra and Umm Kulthūm.

Muhammad al-Akbar (popularly known as Ibn-al-Hanafīyah) had attained eminence as an elder statesman, brave warrior, eloquent speaker and an erudite scholar. He acknowledged Abu Bakr and 'Umar as the foremost among the Prophet's companions and also paid compliments to 'Uthman.

Ibn Khallikān, the noted annalist says that Muhammad was exceptionally pious and a learned scholar. Being powerfully built and robust, he was the standard bearer of his father in the battle of Jamal. Born two years before 'Umar assumed the caliphate, he died in Muharram, 81/March, 700 although there is a difference of opinion among his biographers about the exact date on which he died. He was buried in the Jannat al-Baqi cemetery at Medina. A number of eminent scholars, mystics, reformers and fighters in the way of God were his descendants whose achievements have been preserved in biographical works and mystical treatises. His lineage is also found at different places in India and is known as 'Alvīs [20]

Ibn Jarīr says that 'Ali had 14 sons and 17 daughters while Wajidi maintains that he had lineal descendants by five of his sons, namely, Hasan, Husain, Muhammad b. al-Hanafīyah, 'Abbas and 'Umar.

'Ali's Wisdom and Eloquence

A large number of the wise sayings of 'Ali have survived as popular maxims which also furnish examples of the elegent style of his expression. Before we cite a few of these rich repertoires of wisdom, whose parallel it would be difficult to find in other languages, it seems proper to give here a few observations of eminent litterateurs and critics of Arabic language. Ahmed Hassan al-Zayyāt writes in his history of Arabic literature :

> "We do not find anyone immediately after the Prophet, or even among the succeeding generatians, who is more fluent than 'Ali or whose style was equally sublime and magnificent. He was a remarkable orator, who enlivened his speech with florid and sententious expressions, captured the minds of his audience and his arguments had depth and weight. He possessed the skill to enunciate anything in the way he desired. All are agreed that he was paramount among the greatest Muslim orators and men of letters."[21]

'Abbas Mahmūd al-'Aqqad says :

> "The sublime speeches and writings which have come down to us from 'Ali are unique in elegance of style and composition and cannot be surpassed by anyone. These have sententious maxims artfully interwoven, of which each more meaningful than the other, more elegant in style and in its syntactic construction."[22]

A distinguishing characteristic of 'Ali's aphorism is that they point to their author's depth of thought, keen observation and intimate knowledge of the character of the people. His writings and orations give the impression that they embody the outcome of lifelong experience of someone well-versed in human psychology and riddle of existence as well as the marked traits of different peoples.

It would also be relevant here to briefly review the *Nahjul Balāghah* which is supposed to be a collection of 'Ali's sermons, letters and sayings. It was compiled by Al-Sharīf al-Razi (359-404/970-1012).

Ahmed Hasan al-Zayyāt, a noted critic of Arabic literature, writes about the book :

> "A number of persons hold the view that a greater part of this compilation was written by Al-Sharīf al-Razi himself since it contains cavilling and derogatory remarks about the Prophet's companions which are unbecoming of them, and also because it speaks about some of the matters pertaining to philosophy, ethics and sociology which have a later origin. It often describes the characteristics of certain things very minutely or has an affected elegance which was not then prevalent. Such a style of expression was not favoured by the people in those days Obviously, it has some of the works of 'Ali but a greater part of it has been attributed to him."[23]

Any literary critic conversant with the style and mode of expression common in the life-time of 'Ali and also with a knowledge of his inherent and exceptional gifts and the experience he had of the vicissitudes of life would easily be able to distinguish his genuine expressions from those attributed to him. We have accordingly made our own selection of 20 maxims of 'Ali which have been taken from such literary works as Al-Mubarrad's *Al-Kāmil*, Ibn 'Abdur Rabbah's *'Iqd al-Farīd* and *Al-Bayān wat-Tabyeen* of Jāhiz which contain excerpts of 'Ali's orations and writings.

However, the number of commentaries on the *Nahjul Balāghah* written so far exceed fifty. More eminent commentators of the work are Behqi, Fakhr-ud-din Rāzi and 'Iz-ud-din b. Abi al-Hadīd al-Mada'ini, of whom the explanatory annotation by al-Mada'ini is more detailed and accurate. It has been published by Dar al-Fikr, Beirut in twenty volumes. Among the later scholars Muhammad Abduh has also written a commentary on it and drawn attention towards its study as a literary work. His work has caused to make it popular with the centres of learning.

1. Worth of a man is recognised by his performance if it

is better than others.

2. Talk to the people in keeping with their level of intelligence and understanding. Would you like some one to reject Allah and His Apostle (because of his being unable to understand them).
3. A patrician is thrown off balance when he is hungry while a man low-minded gets ruffled when he is full up.
4. Give rest to the hearts by finding judicious anecdotes for them since the heart also gets tired and bored like the body.
5. Egoity prefers desires, takes to indolence, inclines to pleasure-seeking, incites to evil for vice dwells in it, is easy-going and lethargic. It gets lean on being coerced and perishes when forsaken.
6. Beware ! Nobody amongst you should pin his hope in anyone save Allah ; fear nothing save your own sins; nor feel shy of learning anything not known to you; and, if you are asked something he does not know, you should say so.
7. Indigence blunts intelligence and man striken with poverty becomes an alien in his own homeland.
8. Ineptness is a curse, perseverence is valour, piety is a treasure and awe of God is a shield.
9. Courtesy and morals are like attires which remain new whenever put on. Reason is like stainless mirror.
10. When one is dominant, the virtues of others are also attributed to him but when he suffers a downfall even his personal merits are denied.
11. When a man conceals anything in his heart, his tongue gives an indication and facial expressions let it out.
12. Do not become a bondsman of anyone save your own self for God has made you to be born free.
13. Avoid banking on airy hopes for these are the assets of fools.
14. Should I tell you who is the greatest scholar. He is one who does not present vices winsomely, makes not one

unafraid of God's designs nor despairs one of His mercy.

15. The people are fast asleep, they will regain consciousness when they are dead.
16. People become enemies of what they do not know.
17. People have a closer affinity to their own times than to that of their ancestors.
18. The tongue conceals a man (i. e , the worth of a man is disclosed by his speech).
19. One who comes to know himself has nothing else to fear.
20. A word uttered by the tongue often robs a man of all his blessings.

Poetic Compositions of 'Ali

There is a well-known collection of poems attributed to 'Ali which are often cited by writers but knowledgeable critics doubt their authenticity. Some of these poems are even unbecoming of him. Yaqūt al-Hamavi writes in the *M·ojam al-Adab'ā* : I have read the statement of Abu Mansūr Muhammad b. Ahmed al-Azhari in the *Kitāb al-Tahzīb* that Abu 'Uthman al-Mazni said : It is not established that 'Ali ever composed any verse except the following two which say :

> Quraishites long to kill me, but this shall never be; they will succeed not, nor fulfil their vow.
>
> If killed, my life will be a trust in lieu of the great and mighty whose trace can never be effaced.[24]

Ibn Hishām has cited verses attributed to 'Ali at several places in his *al-Sīrat al-Nabawīyah* but he has also expressed doubts about their genuineness.

A Unique Style of Reprobation

Before concluding this painful chapter it appears necessary to cite a few examples of the expression of 'Ali's disapproval and anger. These are the bitter utterances of a lacerated heart—preserved by the history of movements and missions of

literature—and in the case of 'Ali they deserve to be given due importance. They came to be written or spoken primarily due to the troublesome attitude of the people of Iraq, and also because of the perfidy of those who apparently championed his cause and claimed to be his admirers and followers but always obstructed his every move. These passages by 'Ali excel in elegance of style and composition not only in the literature of his time, but deserve a place in the timeless literary creations of all languages. They are unique in the history of literature. These have been taken from 'Ali sermons addressed to his followers and troops.

> "How long shall I accord you the consideration accorded to camels with injured humps, though healthy apparently, or to worn clothes which when stiched on one side give way on the other. Whenever a vanguard force of Syria hovers over you, every one of you shuts his door and hides himself like the lizard in its hole and a badger in its den.
>
> "He whom people like you support must, by God, be debased and he who throws arrows with your support is as if he shoots arrows that are broken at the head. Within the courtyards you are numerous but under the banners of war you are only a few. I know what can improve you and how your crookedness can be straightened. But, by God, I will not spoil myself for improving you."
>
> "May Allah chasten and disgrace you. You do not understand the right as you comprehend the wrong and do not resist falsehood as you oppose the truth.
>
> "O people of Iraq ! you are like that pregnant woman who miscarried after the period of pregnancy was over and whose husband died, and after whose prolonged widowhood a distant relation inherited her.
>
> "And listen ! By God in whose power lies my life, these people will overcome you not because they have taken a more righteous path than you, but because of their

hastening towards the wrong and your moving at a snail's pace in my support. People are afraid of the oppression of their leaders while I fear the severity of my subjects.

"I called you for *jihād*. but you did not move from your place. I warned you but you did not listen. I called you secretly as well as openly, but you did not respond. I gave you sincere advice, but you did not accept it.

"You are present here, but in fact absent: slaves you are, but have taken the place of masters. I rehearse to you the pith of wisdom but you turn away, I sermonize you most eloquently, but you disperse away. I urge you to fight the rebels but you scatter like the people of Sabā before I conclude my speech. You have your own counsels which are more pleasing to you. I straighten you in the morning but you come back to me curved as the back of a bow in the evening. The straightener has become weary of those to be straightened while you have become incorrigible.

"O those whose bodies are present but wits are absent, whose wishes are scattared, and whose leaders are distressed. Your comrade is obedient to God but you are disobedient to Him. The leader of Syria disobeys God but his people are with him. I wish Muʿāwiyah had a transaction with me like the money-changers who exchange *dirhams* for *dinārs*. I would have given him ten Iraqis for one man of Syria for these are the people who are divided in so far as the truth is concerned. they have lost the courage to fight in the war; their bodies have congregated but the aspirations are divers. They witness every-where the pledges made to God being broken but they remain unmoved. These are the exalted people of Arabia, honoured and esteemed but their multitude is of little significance for their hearts rarely converge on any matter. I wish that you were the balm for my sore, but you really constitute my

ulcer. You are the thorn with which one tries to take out the point of another thorn embedded in the flesh, but knows that it will also get fixed up like the earlier one.

'I find that you are like lizards sticking to one another. You neither take the right in your hand nor forbid the excesses and oppressions. You are neither steadfast in the battlefield nor dependable friends in times of peace. I am sick of your company and feel lonely inspite of your multitude.

"O those whose bodies are assembled but whose longings are divided! Your talk softens the stones and your actions encourage the enemy to invade. He gets dejected who calls you out and one who has to deal with you never feels assured. It is your custom to talk glibly and keep others in the dark. You have asked for more time from me like the debtor who is indebted for a long time. How would you defend your country when you have not been able to guard your own houses? For whom and under which commander and ruler would you fight after me? He is verily duped who is deceived by you and one who has you as his followers has an arrow which never strikes its target."[25]

Notes and References :-

1. For details see 'Abbās Mahmūd al-'Aqqād, *Mu'āwiyah*, pp. 17-18.
2. At the time of Caliph 'Uthmān's martyrdom Mu'āwiyah had been ruling over the country for twenty years.
3. Ahmad Amīn, Dr., *Fajr al-Islām*, Cairo, 1935, p. 332.
4. Ahmad Hasan Zayyāt, *Tarikh al-Adab al-Islāmi*, Cairo, n. d. p. 102.
5. *Al-'Abqariyāt al-Islāmiyah, op. cit.*, p. 869.
6. *Al-Bidayah wan Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VII, pp. 288-89. Ibn Jarir and few other historians place the battle with the Khārijites in 38/658.
7. *Ibid*, Vol. VII, p. 308.
8. Al-Mubarrad, *Al-Kamil*, Cairo, n. d., Vol. I, pp. 30-31.
9. *Al-Bidāyah wan Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 3_4 (condensed version).

10. *Ibid*, p. 328.
11. *Al-Jauharata fi Nasb an-Nabi, op. cit*, Vol. VI, p. 274.
12. *Al-Riyāz al-Nazarate, op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 238.
13. Q. 99 : 8 9
14. *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VII, pp. 328-29.
15. Attempts were made on the lives of Mu'āwiyah and 'Amr b. Al-'Aas but they escaped. Details can be seen in *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 330.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 331-32. The reports about the burial of 'Ali at some other place are regarded as spurious by Ibn Kathīr.
17. *Lit.*, a successor of one of the Prophet's companions.
18. Sarakhshi, *Mabsūt*, Vol. II, p. 2.
19. Marfaq b. Ahmad, *Manāqib al-Imām al-Āzam*, Hyderabad, 1321 A. H. Vol. II, p. 83.
20. Ibn Khallikān, *W'afyēt al-Ā'yān*, Cairo, Vol. II, p. 231.
21. *Tārikh al-Adab al-Arabi, op. cit.*, p. 194.
22. *Al-'Abqariyāt al-Islāmiyah*, pp. 973-74.
23. *Tārikh al-Adab al-'Arabi, op. cit*, p. 230.
24. Yaqut al-Hamawi, *M'ojam al-Adabā*, Beirut, n. d., p. 43.
25. *Nahj al-Balaghah, op. cit.*, (Extracts taken from differents sermons).

VIII

ALI AND MUAWIYAH

There is perhaps no pen-portrait of any historic personality, excepting, of course, that of the Prophet of Islam, which depicts so graphically and vividly the outlook and inclination, cast of mind and character and feelings and emotions, as that of 'Ali by one of his colleagues. The description combines richness of Arabic vocabulary and naunces of its idiom and phraseology with the utmost sincerity and warmth of devotion for 'Ali.

The description was given at the instance of Mu'āwiyah in a sitting of his own comrades when 'Ali was no more alive. It required courage and straight-forwardness to express attachment to 'Ali in a situation in which only a person aware of his responsibility to God in speaking out the truth could do it.

Abu Sāleh relates that one day Mu'awiyah asked Dharār b. Dhamurah to tell him something about 'Ali. Dharār first requested to be excused, but when Mu'āwiyah insisted, he said :

> "He was very far-sighted, very strong, inclined to stoutness, candid in speech and absolutely just in delivering a verdict. He was a fount of knowledge and looked askance at the world and its pleasures. The night and its darkness were more agreeable to him. God be my witness that his eyes were often filled with tears and he always appeared to be care-worn. He had the

touch of conscience which often made him to reproach himself. He was happy to wear garments made of coarse cloth and to partake coarse food, lived like a common man, and made no distinction between himself and others. Whenever we asked anything, he replied; whenever we went to see him, he saluted first; and whenever we invited him, he came ungrudgingly: but, despite this nearness, his awe seldom permitted us to talk in his presence or join in his conversation. When he laughed, his teeth used to shine as hailstones. He respected the pious and loved the poor. No man of influence or authority could hope to achieve any undeserved gain from him, nor the weak ever gave up hope of obtaining justice from him.

"I declare to God that I have seen him often after the nightfall, standing on a prayer-mat, holding his beard and weeping bitterly. I have heard him sobbing and lamenting. It seemed as if he had been stung by a scorpian or snake. I can still visualise him saying: 'O world, dost thou want to entice me away? Hast thou brought thy charms for me? Away, away with thee. Go about thy business and deceive somebody else. I have already divorced thee thrice. O world thy pleasures are transitory, thy life is short, and thy allurements are unreliable and dangerous. Alas! I have but little provisions, the voyage is long and the route is extremely perilous'."[1]

The narrator goes on to say that as Mu'āwiyaḥ listened to this description, he started shedding tears which fell on his beard; he wiped them with his sleeve and said, his voice choked with sobs: 'Allah may have mercy on Abul Hasan. He was in truth a man of mettle. Dharār, how do you feel from his separation?' Dharār replied, 'My grief is comparable to the woman whose child has been slain in her lap, whose tears neither dry nor her grief is lightened.'

Indifference to the World

The chief characteristic of 'Ali, the quality that marked his greatness was his indifference to the world and all its pleasures at the time when he had the means to enjoy them, held the helm with a strong hand and also enjoyed such a esteem of the people that nobody would have found fault with him if he had given up patriarchal simplicity of his predecessors.

Yahya b. Moin relates from J'ad, who heard it from Hasan b. Sāleh, that once 'Umar b. 'Abdul 'Aziz[2] was conversing with his colleagues about the godly persons of old. He said: 'The man most pious in the world had been 'Ali.'[3]

Abu 'Ubayda relates from 'Antara who said: "I went to see 'Ali b. Abu Tālib in Khornaq.[4] He was lying wrapped in a sheet of cloth and shivering with cold. I said, 'O Commander of the faithful, God has allowed a share to you and your family in the treasury and still you are shivering all over with cold?' He replied, 'I do not take anything from your property This is the wrapping with which I had come from Medina.'[5]

Abu Nu'aym narrates from a man of Bani Thaqīf who had been appointed as governor of 'Ukbar[6] by 'Ali: "There was hardly anyone in that place who performed the prayers. When 'Ali came there he asked me to meet him at the time of *zuhr* prayer. I went to him at the appointed time and saw a cup and a jug filled with water before him. 'Ali sent for an earthenware. It was brought and was sealed. I thought that 'Ali wanted to tempt me and he will now bring out some diamonds or jewels from it. He broke the seal and the earthenware contained merely roasted flour. He took out some of it, mixed it with water and drank it. Thereafter he offered me some. I could not contain myself and said, 'O Commander of the faithful: you take this food here in Iraq: here even the commoners are used to a better diet.' He replied, 'By God, I do not keep it sealed because of miserliness. The reason is that I purchase only that much as I need for my consumption and fear its being augmented by others when it is finished. I am particular about it as I do not want that anything save what is clean and lawful goes down

my throat."[7]

Once some *falūda*[8] was presented to 'Ali. When he saw it he said, "Thy smell is pleasant, colour is agreeable and taste is delicious, but I do not want myself to become used to something of which I have not been habituated so far."[9]

Zayd b. Wahb is on record that once 'Ali came out of his house only with a wrap around down his waist and shawl covering his body. When he was asked how he managed to live in that dress, he replied, 'I like it because it is unostentatious, easy for offering prayers and a *sunnah*[10] for the believers[11]."

Mujamm'a b Al-Sam'ān al-Taymi reports: 'Once 'Ali b. Abi Talib took his sword to the market and called out: "Who will purchase it from me? If I had four dirhams to purchase a wrap-around, I would not have sold it."[12]

Ahmad relates on the authority of 'Abdullah b. Razīn that once I went to see 'Ali who presented me a melon. I said, "God may help you, 'Ali, you could have treated us with a duck for Allah has made you affluent." He replied, "O Ibn Razīn, I have heard the Prophet saying that only two types of edibles are lawful for a Caliph; one that he and his family members take and the other with which he entertains others"[13]

Abu Ubayda is on record that once 'Ali distributed stipends thrice in a year. Thereafter some mony was received from Isbahān. So he gave the direction: 'Treat it as the fourth instalment of the stipend. I am not a treasurer (to keep watch over it).' Certain persons accepted it while others declined.[14]

Once 'Ali b. Abi Talib said in a sermon delivered by him:

> "O people! I swear to Allah save whom there is no deity that I have not taken anything from your property except this - then he took out a small bottle containing attar or some other scent – this was presented to me by a peasant." Thereafter he went to the state exchequer and said, "Take it," giving the bottle to be deposited in the exchequer, and then recited the verse:
>
> He who has a small wooden case is safe,
> To take out one date a day and chew."

Habīra b. Maryam relates that Hasan b. 'Ali delivered a short speech on the death of 'Ali in which he said:

> "O people! Yesterday a man departed from you who has not left any silver or gold. He had in his possession only 700 dirhams which he got as his share from the state exchequer. He intended to purchase a slave from it."[15]

Frugal living is not all that constitutes piety and rejection of worldly-mindedness. It is even harder to take the path of righteousness by submitting to the law and accept the verdict of one's own subordinate judge like a commoner, particularly when the plaintif is a non-Muslim. 'Ali b. Abu Talib acquited himself well in this test also as it would be seen from the following incident.

Hākim relates from Sh'ebi: " 'Ali lost his coat of mail on the occasion of battle of Jamal. The person who found it sold it to somebody else and ultimately it was found with a Jew. 'Ali brought an action against the Jew in the court of Qadi Shuraih. 'Ali produced Hasan, his son, and a slave Qanbar as his witnesses but Qadi Shuraib demanded another witness to be produced in place of Hasan. 'Ali asked the Qazi whether he was averse to accept the evidence of Hasan? Qazi Shuraih replied in negative, saying, 'I remember your own ruling that the evidence of a son in favour of his father is inadmissible.' Thereafter he decided that the coat of mail belonged to the Jew. But the Jew said: 'The Commander of the faithful himself came to the court of his own Qadi and submitted to the decision delivered against him. By God, the claim of the Commander of faithful is correct. This is his coat of mail which fell down from his camel and found its way to me. Thereafter he said: 'I bear witness that there is no God save Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Apostle of Allah. 'Ali made a present of his coat of mail to him. He always kept company with 'Ali and was killed in the battle of Siffin[16].

'Ali's piety and frugality and seriousness never made him dry and gloomy nor was he ever seen with a frowning look. People never avoided his company. On the contrary, he had a

look of amiability and kindness and treated all who came to him with extreme courtesy. His biographers have described him as a handsome man with a dignified look and smiling face. He walked majestically and stepped lightly.[17]

Behaviour with Officials and Muslims

'Ali was also cordial even to the state functionaries appointed as administrators and revenue collectors although it becomes difficult for a strict and devout ruler like him to be sociable with such officials. He repeatedly issued instructions to the office bearers emphasising on them that :

> "Behave justly and on terms of equality with the people. Pay heed to their needs with patience since you have to deal with the representaives of the masses. Do not forbid anyone to bring his needs to your notice, nor let anybody wait for long in solving his problem. For the collection of revenues, do not auction anybody's winter clothing, nor his cattles, nor yet his slaves. Do not also whip anyone for non-payment of his dues.'[18]

To the collectors of revenues and poordue (*zakāt*) he gave the directions :

> "Then go to them maintaining your dignity and prestige till you stand among them. Then salute them and wish them peace and blessings of God. Then say to them, "O people of Allah, the vicegerent of Allah and His Caliph has sent me to you to collect from you Allah's share in your properties. Is there anything of His share in your properties ? If so, give it to His vicegerent. If someone among them says "No", then do not repeat the demand. If someone speaks to you in the affirmative, then go with him without frightening, threatening, pressurising or oppressing him. Take whatever he gives you such as gold or silver (coins). If he has cattle or camels do not enter upon them save with his permission, because the major part belongs to him. Therefore, when you get there do not enter upon them

like one who has full control over them or in a violent manner. Do not scar any animal, do not tease anyone and do not let the owner feel grieved about anything. Divide the property into two parts and let the owner choose one. When he has chosen do not object to it. Then divide the remaining into two parts and let him choose one and when he has chosen do not raise any objection. Continue like this till only that much remains which is enough to satisfy Allah's dues. Then take Allah's dues from him. If he disputes your action, then mix the two (separated) parts and repeat what you have done before till you take Allah's dues from the property."[19]

Guardian and Reformer

'Ali was not a ruler concerned only with the administrative affairs nor even a Caliph like the later Umayyads and 'Abbāsids, but he was a patriarchal head of the state like Abu Bakr and 'Umar; a patron and a guide and a guardian; an exemplar of moral behaviour; and a custodian of the religious conduct of the people. He was ever vigilant to see how far the people followed the practices of the Prophet, in what way they were deviating from them and what alien influences from the conquered people were making impression on them. He urged them to offer prayers, advised them about religious matters, told them what Allah has made lawful or unlawful to them and how they could fulfil their obligations to their Creator. He used to sit in the mosque where people came to seek his advice about their religious or personal affairs He wandered about in the market to tell the shopkeepers how to carry on their trade. He used to tell them : "Fear God, be careful to give full measure and never be unfair to anyone."

He was extremely careful in his personal dealings and never tried to take advantage of his position as head of the state or of his noble lineage. If he had to purchase anything, he searched for a shopkeeper or seller who did not know him. He disliked

that anybody should make any concession to him because of his being the head of the state. Accessible to the meanest of his subjects, he never gave an impression of superiority in his talks and behaviour with others and demanded a similar conduct from his governors and officers. He kept a sharp eye on the functionaries of the state and sometimes deputed inspectors to find out how his officers behaved with the people, and what was the opinion of the masses about their administrators. The executives and public servants were filled with his awe for on occasions he reprimanded and reproached them for their lapses. A number of letters written by 'Ali to his officers show his anxiety in this respect.[20]

'Ali upbraided his agents and officials not merely for administrative indiscretion or negligence in following the norms of religious code, but also for their failings in conduct and behaviour and required them to follow scrupulously the manners and morals of the Prophet and his successors.

One such letter reproaching 'Uthmān b. Hunayf, the governor of Basra, was written by 'Ali when he came to know that the people of the city had invited him to a banquet in which he was entertained lavishly while commoners were ignored. Wrote 'Ali :

> "O Ibn Hunayf, I have come to know that a young man of Basra invited you to a feast and you leapt towards it. Foods of different colours were chosen for you and big bowls were presented to you. I never thought that you would accept the feast of a people who turn out the beggars and invite the rich. Look at the morsels you take. Leave that about which you are in doubt and take only that about which you are sure that it has been secured lawfully."[21]

Administrative Policy of 'Ali

The governing principle of 'Ali's administrative policy and the system of government was that the moral values and precepts and norms of Islam should in no case be allowed to be impaired

for the sake of administrative needs and exigencies of political situation. The paradigm to be followed in all cases was the example set by the Prophet and his immediate successors. The Caliph or vicegerent of the Prophet was, first and foremost, a missionary of Islam, an ideal of Islamic morality for the people than merely a head of the state. 'Ali was determined to abide by this principle by giving it priority over all other administrative and political considerations—irrespective of the cost he might have to pay for it. He actually did pay a heavy price for upholding this principle. And he did it willingly with a clear conscience.

Al-'Aqqād has skilfully thrown light on the nature of differences between 'Ali and Mu'āwiyah. He writes :

> "It was not a conflict between two individuls but between two systems, which, in modern phraseology, can be called a conflict between two schools of thought. In fact, the clash was between the system of caliphate (represented by 'Ali) and the scheme of administration (epitomized by Mu'āwiyah b. Abi Sufyan)."[22]

'Ali's administration marked the continuation of the earlier right-guided caliphate while Mu'āwiyah's rule, though not falling in the same category, was the best government based on justice and equity which never stepped outside the limits set by Islam. Shah Mo'īn-ud-dīn Nadwi writes in his *Tārīkh-i-Islām* :

> "Mu'āwiyah was an autrocratic ruler who took all possible steps to strengthen and safely run his administration. At the same time, he never took any step unbecoming of a just ruler. He was extremely forbearing--his tolerance was proverbial, acknowledged even by his enemies. The well-known Shi'ite historian Ibn Taqtafi says : 'Mu'awiyah was at times indulgent and often severe, but was predisposed to leniency.' A number of incidents illustrating his restraint and moderation have been mentioned by Al-Fakhri, Tabri and other historians. He was never harsh unless he was compelled to take a severe step. The motto he followed

> was : 'If my whip serves the purpose, I never unsheath my sword and where admonition is sufficient, I do not use the whip. I never severe the relationship with anyone even if it is slender like a hair......when they pull it, I make it loose and when they loosen it, I pull it.'"[23]

The conflict between these two differing principles and the view-points had its inevitable outcome. These were two schools of thought, both endeavouring consistently with the demands inherent in their stands. The first had already been in existence while the change of times and contact with new social systems and their influences had brought forth the latter. The distance in time from the prophetic age was increasing and the people who had been guided by the Prophet and built the spiritual-moral society informed by God-consciousness, or atleast the more prominent among them, had already passed away. 'Aqqād has aptly described the situation in these words :

> "The term of 'Ali's caliphate was abnormal in the sense that those who preceded him were quite different from those who came after him. There was nothing unusual in it since the course of events had shaped itself as it had to do. Rather, neither had become secure and well-founded nor had it collapsed. Each was in the stage of its evolution or like a building which had neither crumbled down nor could be regarded as strong and durable."

The divergence between the two standpoints was brought about by the changing times. The transformation Islamic society was undergoing gradually was in keeping with human psychology and the natural law of change, though it proved favourable to Mu'āwiyah. In his realm and among his troops there was stability, law and order, and an atmosphere of submissiveness to the ruler. The dominion under 'Ali had traditionally been unruly and the conditions were conducive to manipulate things for one's personal benefit. The situation obtaining in the possessions of 'Ali was proving advantageous to the opposite party. 'Aqqād has thus delineated the state of affairs.

"Mu'āwiyah b. Abi Sufyān had in Syria and neighbouring lands people who were amenable to orderliness while unruly and indisciplined people who lived in the Arabian Peninsula came to be assigned to 'Ali."[24]

"Thus the differences between 'Ali and Mu'āwiyah were not confined to any particular issue which could have been solved by the ascendancy of one of the two contenders. The issue in question was that there were two parallel standpoints and social orders, each of which was comprehensive and antithesis of the other. One party was not prepared to make any compromise on the matter of principle but had internal division and discontent within its ranks The other group was willing to submit to any government that could be established and was in the mood of making it strong and stable."[25]

'Ali's Statesmanship

Irrespective of this ideological conflict in which the forces of discipline, orderliness and dutifulness were arrayed on one side and those of irritation, intransigence and insubordination on the other, and its outcome in the shape of hardships that were endured by 'Ali and the peace and submission of his subjects enjoyed by Mu'āwiyah, the fact remains that the political policy adopted by 'Ali was the most befitting of him and no other strategy was appropriate for a wise and broadminded statesman of his stature.

'Aqqād has correctly observed that :

" 'Ali chalked out an ideal political policy from the first day of his caliphate He could not have adopted any other course as some of his critics and historians suggest and plead that he could have, in that case, spared himself the hardships and difficulties he had to face in future."[26]

The historians and analysts who weigh different individuals with the same balance ignoring the varied times and circums-

tances and individual characteristics and moral standards argue that if 'Ali had not made haste in deposing Mu'āwiyah b. Abi Sufyān and Qays b. S'ad from the governorship of Syria and Egypt, rejected arbitration and handed over the assassins of 'Uthmān, he would not have had to fight the battles nor faced the difficulties and hardships he had to confront subsequently.

'Aqqād has profoundly examined all these incidents and episodes and reached the conclusion which does not agree with this view. He writes :

> "If we analyse the outcome of his policies from different angles we reach the conclusion that if he ('Ali) had adopted a different course of action, his success would have neither been assured nor free from all dangers. Rather, I think, the chances of his success would have been even more remote. That course of action would have been even more dangerous; it would have lacked the element of goodwill and been interpreted as disregarding the counsel of his well-wishers."[27]

He says further :

> "The critics of 'Ali whether of his own time or of later periods have seldom put the question to themselves whether it was possible for him to adopt a course of action other than that he did. Has anybody tried to think out whether he would have fared better if he had not chosen the approach he did ?"[28]

Again he says :

> "And we also maintain that if he lacked craftiness, he did not suffer any great loss on account of it. Had he been more wily and astute, he would not have derived any benefit out of it, for the issue was whether the state should remain the rightguided caliphate or a monarchy."[29]

It was but natural and logical that the method of selection of the caliph or successor to the ruler should differ in accordance with the two ideological stands taken by 'Ali and Mu'āwiyah. 'Ali entrusted the matter to a council of elders instead of nominating his eldest son as the Caliph although the latter was fully

qualified for it, was held in esteem by others and happened to be the grandson of the Prophet. "This son of mine is a Chieftain,' the Prophet had once said about Hasan b. 'Ali. But when 'Ali was asked on his deathbed whether he would like to appoint someone as his successor, he replied, "No. I leave you as Prophet had left you." Those attending him insisted, saying, "What would be your reply to Allah that you left your people without a head ?" 'Ali replied, "I would say to Allah that thou appointed me a Caliph when Thou willed, and when Thou took me up, I left them to Thy charge. Mend or spoil them as Thou will."[30]

But Mu'āwiyah b. Abi Sufyān secured the oath of allegiance for his son Yazīd as his successor and head of the state.[31]

A Few Words About Mu'āwiyah

A dispassionate assessment of the complicated situation arising after the martyrdom of 'Uthmān and the influences exerted on the Islamic society by the internal and external forces show that the long administrative experience possessed by Mu'āwiyah and his insight into the character of the people had convinced him that the extensive Islamic empire, faced with delicate problems, could no longer be ruled on the lines the first three caliphs had run the administration. He had come to hold the view that the need of the hour was to safeguard the Islamic realm from the impending dangers, maintain peace and law and order and extend the borders of Islamic possessions as far as possible. He saw no harm in achieving these ends, if necessary, through a just but hereditary monarchy. Such a government, in his view, had to maintain the supremacy of *sharī'ah* by enforcing it as the law of the land but to adopt a liberal policy in adminstrative affairs and in its dealings with the subject peoples. By his time the Islamic realm comprised different races, cultures and religions and hence he considered an elastic political system allowing greater manoeuvrability to solve the delicate problems in conformity with the needs of the time to be more suitable. He, therefore, preferred to take the position of a Muslim general and head of the government.

The Prophet is also reported to have predicted that:

> "Caliphate betaking the path of prophethood would last for 30 years whereupon Allah will give the land (or His land) to whomsoever He will."[32]

Mu'āwiyah never claimed that his rule could be compared to the right-guided caliphate of the first three Caliphs. He claimed to be a ruler and administrator but he often used to say: 'People will think back of me when they would see the marked difference between my method of administration and of those who would hold the helm in future."[33]

Abul Hasan 'Ali b. al-Husain al-Mas'ūdi (d.345,956), the well-known historian and author of *Murawwaj al-Zahab* writes about the daily routine of Mu'āwiyah:

> "He had earmarked five times a day when anybody could see him. Having performed the pre-dawn prayer, he used to sit and listen the happenings and events of the previous day. Thereafter he went to his house, recited a part of the Qur'an, gave necessary instructions to the officials and performed four *rak'ats* of prayer. The nobles and courtiers presented themselves to him for consultation on state affairs. Then he took break-fast at his house but returned after a short while. A chair was placed for him in the mosque where he sat listening to the complaints of anyone, Bedouins, women, children, or any other man with a complaint. He ordered his officials to make necessary enquiries and redress the wrong. When no complainant remained he took a seat on a cot and asked his servants to let the people in whom he seated according to their position. When all had taken their seats, he used to tell them: 'Let me know the problems and needs of those persons who cannot come to me. This is an honour that God has bestowed on you.' He gave necessary instructions about the matters brought to his notice. This was his usual practice everyday."[34]

Notwithstanding these qualities of Mu'āwiyah, the *Ahl-i-*

Sunnat sect of the Muslims is unanimous in the view that 'Ali was lawfully entitled to hold the reins of caliphate.[35]

There is no denying the fact that Muslim arms achieved many victories during the reign of Mu'āwiyah and extended the Islamic dominions. He continued to invade neighbouring countries and the Muslims made new conquests through land and sea. His rule was extended to the coasts of Atlantic Ocean. The governor of Egypt annexed Sudan. A well-equipped fleet consisting of 1700 warships was organised which succeeded in conquering many of the islands of the Grecian Archipelago like Cyprus, Rodes etc. He had divided the army into two parts; one called *al-shawāti* was equipped with outfit and supplies to carry on warfare during winter. Similarly the wing known as *al-Sawā'if* fought during the summer season. The arrangement had ensured a constant vigil of the boarders of Islamic possessions. In the year 48/668 Mu'āwiyah sent an expedition to attack Constantinople by land and sea, but the battlements of the city proved too strong to be impregnated and the Greek-fire kept the Muslim fleet at bay. Those who took part in this expedition included 'Abdullah b. 'Abbās, 'Abdullah b. 'Umar, 'Abdullah b. Zubayr, Abu Ayyūb Ansari and Yazid b. Mu'awiyah. Abu Ayyūb Ansāri who had been the host of the Prophet on his arrival in Medina died in the battle and was buried near the protective wall of the city. 'Uqba b. Nāf'e marched into Africa during the reign of Mu'āwiyah and with the help of newly-converted Berbers to Islam beat down all opposition. He built the famous city of Qairwān which was also his military's cantonement, and forced his way until he reached the shores of Atlantic.[36]

Mu'āwiyan was undoubtedly a zealous Muslim and well-wisher of Islam. He wanted to maintain the Islamic character of his kingdom. Astute, farsighted and an able administrator, he did not allow his personal ambitions to interfere when the honour of Islam or Muslims was in danger. This is demonstrated by an event recorded by a number of historians besides Ibn Kathīr who writes :

"Hopelessly beaten on several occasions by the Syrian

forces, the Byzantine Emperor was scared of Mu'āwiyah. When he came to know of the war between Mu'āwiyah and 'Ali, he came to the Syrian boarder with a formidable army and offered to help Mu'āwiyah against 'Ali. Mu'āwiyah wrote back to him : "By God, if you do not stop your incursions and do not go back to your country, I will unite with my cousin 'Ali and depose and expel you from your own country and make the wide expanse of world straitened for you. The Byzantine Emperor was so frightened by Mu'āwiyah's reply that he appealed for armistice and peace."[37]

That Mu'āwiyah b. Abu Sufyān was a companion of the Prophet who also admired Mu'āwiyah on several occasions can not be lost sight of by any impartial and fairminded person. Those who imprecate upon Mu'āwiyah should better keep in mind that he is entitled to our respect like other companions of the Prophet. Abu Dawūd relates from Abu Sa'eed that the Prophet had said :

> "Do not speak ill of my companions. By God who has my life in His possession, none of you can attain parity with them even if you give away gold of the weight of Uhad in the way of God."

Abu Dawūd records another *hadith* from Abu Bakrah which says :

> 'The Prophet (on whom be peace) said about Hasan : This son of mine is a Chieftain. I am sure that Allah will enable him to bring about amity between two groups of the Muslims."

Another version of the same *hadith* says : 'I hope that Allah will cause him to bring about peace between two major factions."

Vailami relates on the authority of Husain b. 'Ali :

> "I heard 'Ali saying that the Prophet once said that an affair lingering day and night will not come to an end until Mu'āwiyah is at the helm of the state."

Ājuri records in the *Kitāb-us-Sharī'ah* on the authority of 'Abdul Malik b. 'Umayr that Mu'āwiyah once told him :

"I longed to become a Caliph ever since I was told by the Prophet : O Mu'awiyah rule justly if you come to hold the reins of government."

Umm Harām had heard the Apostle saying :

"Those who will take part in the first naval expedition would be redeemed and earn salvation "

And Mu·āwiyah was the first man to organise and lead the naval expedition during the reign of 'Uthmān. Umm Harām also joined the expedition and died during the course of it.

That Mu'āwiyah was an amanuesis of the Prophet is an established fact which is enough to show his trustworthiness. He was candid enough to acknowledge : "I am not a Caliph but the first king in Islam, but the people would know what the kings are like, when I am no more."[38]

Mu'āwiyah had a few hair of the Prophet in his possession. He had willed to place them in his nose before his burial.

Mu·āwiyah was aware of the fact that he was unable to carry on his government on the pattern of earlier Caliphs because of the changed circumstances, extensiveness of his kingdom, intricate administrative problems and a new policy required to solve them. Anyone who cares to take note of the changed conditions would not blame Mu'āwiyah for adopting a different policy for his administration.[39]

The view expressed by Shaikh-ul-Islam Ibn Taimiyah in one of his *fatāwa* clinches the issue in regard to the comparative merits of 'Ali and Mu'āwiyah. He says that "the Book of God, *sunnah* of the Prophet and consensus among the former scholars all go to show that both parties (the followers of 'Ali and Mu'āwiyah) were Muslims, but 'Ali and his comrades were, in comparison to those whom they had to fight, worthier for they followed the right path."[40]

The then Islamic Society

The differences among Muslims and the internecine warfare recounted earlier were unfortunate but these were limited to the ruling circles without any appreciable effect on the Muslim masses. In the entire world of Islam right from its cradle to

the far-flung regions forming part of the Islamic empire, the Muslims were individually and collectively practising believers. observing the devotional exercises and zealously adhering to the injunctions of the Qur'ān and the *sunnah*. The people held the scholars of the Qur'an and *hadīth*, juris-consults and the pious in great esteem; congregational and Friday prayers attracted the people as enthusiastically as the pilgrimage which was performed under the leadership of an *amīr* appointed by the Caliph. Even the *jihād* against belligerent powers had not come an end. Qur'an was recited with the usual zest; it still brought the people to tears. There was absolutely no deviation from the path of *sharī ah* and the authorised beliefs and practices.

Regardless of the weaknesses and deterioration inducted with the passage of time, the Muslims were more God-conscious, had a greater conviction of life after death and the sense of moral accountability than other religious communities like the Christians, Jews, Magians and the Hindus. Nobody dared to indulge in vices openly nor were materialistic leanings discernible in the Muslim society. Epicureanism and utilitarianism were looked with disfavour; the Quranic teachings were still the standard by which the morals and behaviour were judged; the *sunnah* of the Prophet and his companions and successors were the paradigms to be followed. People took keen interest in the persuit of knowledge and were enthusiastic of learning the Qur'an and the *sunnah* and the lives of earlier martyrs and godly souls. There were also spiritual and moral guides who acted as censors of the society, commanded the good and forbade the wrong, and presented an example of virtuous living by their practical example of piety and frugal way of life. This tradition has survived even among the Muslims of later times and they still constitute a brotherhood calling the people to God.

> Lo ! We, even We, reveal the Reminder, and lo ! We verily are its Guardian.[41]

> Thus We have appointed you a middle nation, that ye may be witness against mankind, and that the messenger may be a witness against you.[42]

The Qur'an guarantees the survival of this community whose place cannot be taken by any other people. They have alone preached the message of God to the world and fought for its sake.[43] Muslims have always been more zealous in preserving the prestine purity of their belief and observances. The Christendom was then, as now, lying in wait to take advantage of strife between the Muslims and to reconquer the lands wrested by the Muslims from it.

Byzantine Empire tried to regain the countries like Syria, Egypt and North-Africa which had been held by them for several hundred years, but failed miserably. Ibn Jarīr al-Tabari writes describing the events of 35/655.

> "Constantine, the son of Heraclius, tried to attack Muslims by way of sea with one thousand vessels but a violent tornedo overtook him by the will of God which submerged his entire navy and men. No one excepting the king and a few of his entourage was able to save his life. When he reached Sicily a bath-house was erected for him. As he entered it, he was killed by the people who said, "You have caused the death of our men (so we kill thee in retaliation)."[44]

Notes and References :

1. Ibn Jauzi, 'Abdur Rahmān, *Sifat-us-Safwah*, Hyderabad, 1355 AH., Vol. I, pp. 121-122.
2. 'Umar b. 'Abdul 'Azīz, an Umayyad Caliph, was known for his piety.
3. *Al-Bidāyh wan-Nihāyah, op. cit*, Vol. VIII, p. 5.
4. An Iranian imperial castle existed at the place.
5. *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah*, Vol. VIII, p 3. A similar report is also to be found in the *Hilyatul Auliyā wa Tabaqāt al-Asfiyā* (Beirut, 1980) of Abu Nu'aym Asfahāni.
6. A city near Mosul.
7. *Al-Hilyatul Auliyā, op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 82.
8. A kind of soft drink.
9. *Hilyatul Auliyā, op. cit*,. Vol. I, p. 81.
10. After the custom of the Prophet.

11. *Al-Muntakhab*, Vol. V, p. 58.
12. *Al-Bidayāh wan Nihāyah*, Vol. VIII, p. 3.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Kanz al-'Ummāl, op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 32.
15. Ibn-Abi Shayba, *Kitāb al-Fadhā'il*, Karachi, 1987, Vol. XII, p. 87.
16. *Kanz al-'Ummāl, op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 6; *Al-Hilyatul Auliyā, op cit.*, Vol. IV, p, 139.
17. *Al-Bidayāh wan-Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 223.
18. *Nahjul Balāghah, op. cit.*, letter No. 51.
19. *Ibid.* letter No. 25.
20. A number of letters included in the *Nahjul Balāghah* demonstrably bear the style and elegance of 'Ali.
21. *Nahjul Balāghah, op. cit.*, letter No. 45.
22. *Al-'Abqariyāt al-Islāmiyah*, op. cit., p. 892.
23. Moin-ud-din Nadwi, *Tarīkh-i-Islam*, Azamgarh, 1968, Vol II, p. 35 (on the authority of Y'aqūbi, Vol. II, p. 83.)
24. *Al-Abqariyāt al-Islāmiyah, op. cit.*, p. 869.
25. *Ibid, p.* 892.
26. *Ibid*, p. 895.
27. *bIid*, p. 915.
28. *Ibid*, p. 915.
29. *Ihid*, p. 930.
30. *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah, op. cit*, Vol. VII, 324.
31. A [detailed account can be seen in Vol. VIII of *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah.*
32. *Sunan Abī Dawūd*, Sa'eed b. Jamhān reports that Safīna told him: 'The Prophet said to me that the caliphate will last among my followers for 30 years and then it would become a monarchy, Thereafter Safina added: 'If you count the years of the caliphate of Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān and add the period of 'Ali's rule, they will make up thirty years.'
33. *Al-Bidāyah wan Niahāyah, op cit.*, Vol. VIII, pp, 146. 153.
34. Al-Mus'udi, Abul Hasan 'Ali b. al-Husain, *Murawwaj al-Zahab wa Mu'āwin al-jauhar*, Cairo, 1303 A. H, Vol. II, pp. 51-52.
35. Fora detailed discussion see Shāh Waliullah's *Izālat al-Khifa 'an Khilāfat al-Khulfa*, Bareilly, n. d. Vol. II, pp. 278-280.
36. Muhammad al-Khizri, *Tārikh al-Umam al-Islāmiyah*, Vol. I, pp. 114-15; Jurji, Zaydān *Al-Intiqād ila Tārikh al-Tamaddun al-Islāmi.*
37. Ibn Taymiyah, *Majmu'a Fatūwa Ibn Taimiyah*, Vol. IV, Riyadh, 1381 A. H., p. 433.
38. *Izālat al-Khife,op. cit.*, pp.146-47.
39. *Ibid*, p. 148-52

40. *Al-Bidāyah wan Nihāyah op. cit*. Vol. VIII, p. 119
41 Q. 15 : 9
42. Q. 2 : 143
43. *Saviours of Islamic Spirit* by the author, *Sifat as-Safwah* of Ibn Jauzi, *Tabaqāt al-Asfiyah* by Abu Nu'aym Asfahāni and innumerable biographical works about Muslim saints and man of God bear witness to this assertion.
44. *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, p. 228.

IX

SOME DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS OF 'ALI

It seems proper at this stage to present a glimpse of 'Ali's character as described by his contemporaries and later historians.

An Enthusiastic Iconoclast

Al-Hakam relates from Abu Muhammad al-Hadhali that 'Ali told him : "Once I was accompanying the Prophet (peace be on him) in a funeral when he said, 'Would that one of you goes to Medina and destroys all the idols and disfigures all the graven images?' I volunteered myself and the Prophet asked me to go ahead. I went and did what the Prophet had desired, and then told him, 'O Apostle of God, I have destroyed all the idols I found there, razed to ground all the graves and not left even one graven image without defacing it.' The Prophet thereupon said : 'Now if anyone reconstructs these idols, images and graves, then he should be deemed to have rejected my prophethood."[1]

Jarīr b. Habbān relates from his father to whom 'Ali told : "I command you to do what the Prophet ordered me. He had asked me to raze to ground all the graves and destroy every idol."[2]

Abu Hayyāj al-Asadi says that 'Ali told him : "I appoint

you to perform the task entrusted to me by the Prophet (peace be upon him). If you come across any graven image, destroy it, and raze to ground if you find a grave above that level.'[3]

Insight into Sharī'ah

A number of reports testify that the Prophet said : " 'Ali is most capable amongst you to deliver a correct judgement." 'Ali is on record that he was comparatively a younger man when the Prophet asked him to go to Yemen. Ali reports : "Thereupon I said to the Apostle of God. 'You are sending me to a people who would be having disputes amongst them but I have no experience of deciding cases.' The Prophet replied, 'Allah will help you to say only what is right and just and you would be yourself satisfied by it.' 'Ali adds that he never had any doubt about the correctness of his judgement since then."[4]

'Umar was always exasperated if 'Ali was not available to solve an entangled problem.[5] He often used to say : ' 'Umar would have been ruined if 'Ali was not there.'[6] If 'Ali was not available on such occasions, he used to say : 'A difficult problem but no Abul Hasan to solve it!'[7]

'Ali was known for his intelligence and judiciousness. His quick wit and sense of justice is demonstrated by a petty yet interesting case that came up before him. Two persons, one with five loaves and the other with three sat down together to take meals. They were joined by a third person when they were about to start eating. All the three ate together and then the third person gave eight coins and went away. The man who had five loaves took five coins and offerd three to the other. The latter, however, insisted on an equal share and the matter was ultimately referred to 'Ali who advised the man offered three conins to accept the same. But he refused and demanded justice. Thereupon 'Ali said that if every loaf was presumed to be divided into three parts and each man ate equally, the man who had five loaves should have taken eight parts and spared seven for the third person. Likewise the man who had three loaves himself took eight parts out of his nine parts. Thus the first man was entitled to seven coins and the second to only one coin.

Learning

Abu 'Umar relates from Abu Tufayl that the latter saw 'Ali delivering a sermon. He was saying to the audience : "You can ask me anything you like about the Book of God. I swear to God that there is not a single verse of the Qur'an about which I do not know when it was revealed; in the night or during day-time while the Prophet was betaking a smooth path or when he was on a hill."[8]

Shurayh b. Hāni says that once he asked 'Aisha about the duration of *masah*[9] on leather socks. She told him to ask 'Ali for he knew more about it since he used to accompany the Prophet in his journeys. Shurayh then asked 'Ali who replied : "The Prophet has allowed it for three nights and two days to the wayfarers and a day and a night for a man at his own place."[10]

The compilations of *aḥādith* contain 586 reports narrated by 'Ali.[11]

Kindheartedness

'Ali was unsurpassed in courage, bravery and intrepidity yet he was equally kindhearted, gentle and courteous. Possessed of a tender heart he was inclined to compassion. At the same time he was warm-hearted, affable and genial to one and all. These qualities are put to the severest test when one own's assassin is produced before anyone. It is related that when his assassin, who had attacked him with the poisoned sword had been arrested, he instructed Hasan : "Lo Hasan! If I do not survive after this assault, strike him only once (with your sword). Do not mutilate his dead body for I have heard the Prophet saying that no dead body should be mutilated even if it were of a biting dog."[12]

When Ibn Muljam was produced befor him, he said : 'Keep him in custody and deal kindly with him. If I remain alive I will decide whether to forgive him or take my revenge. If I die, then only one man is to be killed for taking a life.'[13]

When the dead body of Talha was found by 'Ali after the battle of Jamal, he burst into tears and wept bitterly. Hew ipde

the dust from Talha's face, saying: 'O Abu Muhammad, it is unbearable for me to see you here beneath the stars with cuts and wounds.' Then he added: 'Would that I had died twenty years before this lamentable day.'[14]

Extremely affectionate and indulgent to the youngsters, 'Ali was equally respectful to his elders. He caressed and fondled the children and liked those who took delight in their company. Once he said: 'Father and son have rights over one another. It is the father's right that his son should always obey him, save in the case of any wrongful act, and the son's right is that he should be given a good name, brought up properly and taught the Qur'an.'[15]

Once a man came to 'Ali and said, 'O Commander of the Faithful, I am in need.' 'Ali replied, 'Write it down on the ground, for I do not like to see your face entreatingly.' Thereafter 'Ali gave him more than he wanted.'[16]

Ingenuity of 'Ali

'Ali introduced certain new things which will last to the end of time. Some of these relate to the grammar and syntax of Arabic which will always serve to commemorate his achievement. Abul Qasim al-Zāji writes in the '*Umāli*: "Once I paid a visit to 'Ali whom I saw engrossed in some thought. I enquired, 'What is causing you worry, O Commander of the Faithful?' 'I see people in your city speaking faulty Arabic,' replied 'Ali, 'and I want to prepare a short manual of grammar for them.' I said, 'If you could do that we would get a fresh lease of life and Arabic language would be made secure here.' I called upon 'Ali again after three days. He gave me a paper on which he had jotted down the basic rules of syntax."[17]

'Abbas Mahmūd al-'Aqqād writes:

> " 'Ali b. Abi Talib had made, in truth and reality, a great contribution to the promotion of learning. A report handed down through numerous chains of narrators says that Abul Aswad Ad-Dawli complained to 'Ali that the people in the conquered territories were unable to pronounce Arabic words correctly and that

they made mistakes in reading Arabic writings. 'Ali said in reply, 'Take down what I dictate.' Thus he dictated the basic rules of grammar and syntax and asked Abul Aswad to draft other rules on the same pattern. It was from that time that these rules were known as *Nahv* (syntax)."[18]

The word *Nahv* in Arabic denotes the 'way.' The science of syntax came to be known by the word since 'Ali had said, "Proceed on this way."

'Aqqād also says :

"Compilation of the basic rules of creed, theological dialectics, judicial procedure, jurisprudence, syntax and Arabic script were initiated by 'Ali."[19]

The advice given by 'Ali and accepted by 'Umar and other companions to begin the Islamic Calendar from the *hijrah* (migration) of the Prophet from Makkah to Medina has already been mentioned earlier. This calendar which reminds us of the message of Islam and its values shall last so long as Muslims continue to live on this earth. In fact, this calendar speaks of the ideological sublimity of a great event of human history which changed the course of events.

Some Little Known Aspects of 'Ali's Caliphate

Historians and biographers of 'Ali have generally presented his life in a way that he had diverted his attention solely to the warfare between Syrians and Iraqis or the internal conflict amongst Muslims leaving alone the administration of the countries conquered during the reign of earlier Caliphs and he did not try to extend the frontiers of the Islamic realm. Such a view is not only unjust but amounts to concealment of his certain significant achievements. Some of these facts and events do not find a place in his brographies but as touched upon in different annals and biographical works are given here.

When the people of Persia and Kirmān rose in revolt and refused to pay the taxes 'Ali sent an army to subdue them which succeeded in setting right the recalcitrant population. Ibn Jarīr

al-Tabri recording the events of 39 A. H./659-660 A. D. says:

"'Umar relates from 'Ali that after Ibn-al-Hadhrami was slain, different alliances supporting and opposing 'Ali came into existence. The people of Persia and Kirmān imagined that if they refused to acknowledge the caliphate of 'Ali, they would be saved from paying tribute to him. Thus the people in different regions combined and turned out the tax-collecters.

'Umar says that Abul Qāsim came to know from Muslamah b. 'Uthman through 'Ali b. Kathīr that when the people of Persia refused to pay the tribute, 'Ali consulted his friends as to who should be charged with the responsiblity of chastening the people of Persia. Jāriah b. Qadāmah offered to tell the Commander of the Faithful the name of the man who possessed the required political acumen and determination to accomplish the task. On being asked he suggested Ziyād and 'Ali entrusted the job to him by appointing him as the governor of Persia and Kirmān. He had four thousand troops with him and he succeeded in putting right the entire region."

"'Umar heard from Abul Hasan who relates from 'Ali b. Mujāhid on the authority of Sh'abi that when the people of Jibāl broke the agreement those paying tribute to the caliphate were emboldened to stop payment of the tax. They turned out Sahl b. Hunyaf, the governor appointed by 'Ali from Persia. Ibn 'Abbas offered to subdue Persia and 'Ali sent him to Basra. Ziyad was sent with an army to Persia who got those people under control and they again started paying tribute."[20]

A noteworthy event of the caliphate of 'Ali was the conquest of certain parts of Sind which did not form a part of Islamic realm before him. Al-Baladhuri writes in the *Futūh-ul-Buldān*.

"It was by the end of 38 A. H. and in the beginning of 39 A. H. that 'Ali despatched an army under Harith b.

> Murrah al-'Abdi to the regions beyond the Islamic dominion. The expedition was successful and the army came back laden with booty of war of which one thousand slaves were given away to the people in a single day......The territory conquered was Qayqān in Sind adjacent to Khurāsān."[21]

Another important event was the chastisement of a group of new converts to Islam from Christianity who had abjured their faith. 'Ammār b. Mu'āwiyah al-Dahni cites Ibn Tufail as saying that certain Christian converts to Islam had forsaken Islam. 'Ali deputed M'aqal b. Qays al-Taymi who carried arms against them and brought them back as prisoners.[22]

The merits and virtues of 'Ali related in the *ahādīth* are so numerous that they perhaps exceed those about any other companion of the Prophet. He had in fact been endowed by Providence the qualities seldom found in any man. possibly because he was destined to encounter an unprecedented and extremely difficult situation. May be, The Messenger of God had acclaimed him repeatedly for this reason, and a large number of these have been preserved in the six most authentic compilations of the *ahādīth*. Several writers have written treatises on the subject of which *Al-Khasāis fi Manāqib 'Ali b. Abi Tālib*[23] by Imām Abu 'Abdur Rahmān Ahmad Shu'eb al-Nasā'i (d. 303/915), the author of *Sunan-i-Nasā'i*,[24] is a remarkable work of its kind. He wrote this work when during his stay at Damascus he found a number of people harbouring certain misgivings about 'Ali and speaking ill of him.

Understanding of Prophet's Character

Being a near relation of the Prophet and having spent a considerable part of his life in his company, 'Ali had an intimate knowledge of the character and deportment of the Apostle of God. He had also imbibed many a quality of his mentor. 'Ali was a keen observer who had developed a hunch to discern the like and dislikes and inclinations of the Prophet. He also possessed a fluent tongue which enabled him to articulate the Prophet's

character with grace and elegance.

'Ali has given a lengthy description of the Prophet's character in all its vividness and intensity. A portion of it reads as follows :

> "He was the most generous largehearted, truthful, clement, lenient and amiable. One who saw him for the first time was overawed, but when one kept his company and came to know him intimately, one became attached to him like an inseparable companion. Those who had seen him say that they never saw a man like him either before or after him—may God have peace and blessings on His Apostle."

'Ali knew how forbearing and soft-hearted was the Prophet. A cousin of the Prophet whose name was Abu Sufyān b. Harith b. 'Abdul Muttalib happened to meet the Prophet when the latter was leading the expedition to Makkah. He tried to contact the Apostle but as Abu Sufyān had insulted as well as persecuted the Prophet earlier in Makkah, he was given a cold shoulder by him. Feeling distressed and disconsolate at the indifference shown to him, he approached 'Ali to pour forth his lamentation. 'Ali advised him to go again to the Prophet and say what the brothers of Yūsuf had said to him—'*By Allah, verily Allah had preferred thee above us, and we were indeed sinful*[25]—for, said 'Ali, the Prophet never liked anyone to exceed him in words, kind and comforting. Abu Sufyān did as directed by 'Ali and got the reply from the Apostle, '*Have no fear this day! May Allah forgive you, and He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy.*'[26] Abu Sufyān accepted Islam and was thereafter not only known for his piety and strength of faith but was ever so ashamed of his past misdeeds that he always talked to the Prophet with downcast eyes and never dared look into his face.[27]

Notes and References :

1. Ahmad b. Hanbal, *Musand Imām Ahmad b. Hanbal*, Vol. I, p. 87.
2. *Ibid*, p. 89

3. *Ibid*, p. 96
4. *Ibid*, p. 83
5. Waliullah, Shāh, *Izālat al-Khifā', op. cit.* Vol. II, p. 268 (on the authority of Abu 'Umar related from Sa'eed al-Musayyib).
6. *Ibid*, p. 268.
7. *Al-'Abqariyāt-al-Islāmiyah, op. cit.*, p. 968.
8. *Izālat al-Khifā', op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 268.
9. Passing of wet fingers on leather socks put on after ablution.
10. *Al-Musnad, op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 96
11. Siyūti, Jalāl-ud-dīn, *Tārīkh al-Khulfā'*, Cairo, 1305 A. H., p. 167.
12. *Al-Riyadh al-Nazarata, op cit.*, Vol. III, p. 238.
13. *Al-Jauhrata fi Nasb an-Nabi, op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 274.
14. *Al-'Abqariyāt al-Islāmiyah, op. cit.*, p. 959.
15. *Ibid*, p 982
16. The incident has been given in detail in *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, p. 9
17. *Tārīkh al-Khulfā', op. cit.*, p. 181.
18. *Al-'Abqariyāt al-Islāmiyah, op. cit* p. 969.
19. *Ibid*, p. 969
20. Tabri, *Tārīkh un-Umām wal Mulūk, op. cit.*, Vol VI, p. 69.
21. Balādhuri, *Futūh al-Buldān*, Cairo, 1319 A. H., p. 438.
22. Tahāwi, *Ma'ani al-Āthār*, Vol. II, p. 2.
23. Al-Nasa'i, Imām Abu 'Abdur Rahmān' *Al-Khasā'is fi Manaqib 'Ali b. Abi Tālib*, Matb'a *Mazhār al-Ajāib*, Calcutta, 1303/1886.
24. One of the six most authentic works on *Hadith*. *Shimā'il Tirmidhi* or the author's *Sīrat-un-Nabi* can be seen in this connexion.
25. Q. 12 : 91
26. Q. 12 : 92
27. Ibn Qayyim, *Zād-al-Ma'ād, op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 422.

X

HASAN AND HUSAIN

Hasan b. 'Ali

Hasan b. 'Ali b. Abi Tālib, the eldest son of Fātima, the Prophet's daughter, closely resembled his grand-father. He was born, according to authentic reports in mid-Sh'aban, 31/end of January, 625, although others claim his birth to have taken place after a day or two in the month succeeding Ramadhān.

The Prophet was very much attached to him. When he was an infant the Prophet used to kiss his cheeks and lips and often took his tongue in his mouth. He sometimes took Hasan on his lap or seated him on his chest or back. He sometimes, climbed on the back of the Prophet while he was prostrating and on such occasions the Prophet prolonged his prostration. Often the Prophet seated Hasan besides him on the pulpit of the mosque.[1]

Zuhri relates from Anas that Hasan b. 'Ali looked very much like the Prophet[2]. Hāni relates that 'Ali told him: 'Hasan bears a resemblance to the Prophet from chest to head while Husain looks like his grand-father from chest to feet'[3].

'Ali also adored Hasan and held him in great regard. Once 'Ali expressed the wish to hear Hasan making a speech but Hasan showed diffidence to harangue before him. One day when Hasan had taken the floor, 'Ali sat at a place where Hasan could not see him. When Hasan finished his speech 'Ali remarked: 'The same lineage, after all. One is the son of the other.'[4]

Hasan mostly kept quiet and spoke little but when he came to speaking, others were silenced. He seldom attended a banquet; avoided all disputes and never interfered in the affairs of others; but settled the dispute with sound arguments if it was referred to him.[5]

Hasan thrice gave away all of his possessions in the way of God: on two occasions he kept absolutely nothing with him. He performed pilgrimage 25 times on foot with his sacrificial animals driven ahead of him[6]. Whenever 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās saw either Hasan or Husain riding a horse, he always took hold of the briddle as a mark of honour to him. The people finding either of the two circumambulating the K'aba, surged ahead and crowded around them in a way that one feared that they might get hurt.[7]

Hudhayfa reports the Prophet as saying: 'Hasan and Husain are the leaders of the dwellers in Paradise.' Many others including 'Ali, Jābir, Buraida and Abu Sa'eed have narrated similar sayings of the Prophet.

Bukhāri relates from Abu Bakr: 'I saw the Prophet sitting on the pulpit with Hasan b. 'Ali besides him. He addressed the people and then turned his attention to Hasan, saying, "This child of mine is a Chieftain. I hope that God will cause him to restore peace among two factions of the Muslims."[8] There are other reports too narrated by others to the same effect.[9]

Ibn 'Abbās relates that once the Prophet was carrying Hasan on his back. Someone who saw them remarked: 'Young-man, what a fine conveyance you have!' The Prophet promptly replied, "And the rider is also excellent."[10]

Hasan and Husain both were expert riders.

Abu Nuaym reports that Abu Huraira told him: "Whenever I see Hasan my eyes brim over with tears for I have seen that once he came running and sat on the lap of the Prophet. (Then holding his beard he continued) He took hold of the Prophet's beard who put his saliva in Husain's mouth and at the same time supplicated: 'O Allah, I love him, may Thou also hold him dear'. The Prophet repeated it thrice."[11]

Ibn 'Asakir narrates an incident about Hasan :

> " Once Hasan was passing through an enclosed grove where he saw a young slave sitting with a bread in his hand and a dog before him. The slave too k a morsel alternately and fed the dog with the other. In this way he took only half of the bread. Hasan asked him why he had fed half of the bread to the dog and did not himself take more of it. The slave replied, 'Seeing the dog hungry I felt ashamed of myself taking more of the bread.' Hasan then asked, 'Whose slave are you and to whom this grove belongs ?' He replied, 'I am slave of Abān b. 'Uthmān who is the owner of this grove.' Hasan then said to him, 'I put you under oath not to move from here until I return.' He went away and purchased both the slave and the grove and returned to tell him of it. The slave got up to say, 'I am obedient to you after God and His Apostle.' Hasan replied, 'I emancipate thee and also gift this grove to thee.''[12]

Prediction about Hasan

The Prophet's prediction about Hasan that he would bring about harmony between two parties among the Muslims was not just a forecast meant to be heard and assented to by other Muslims. For Hasan it must have been a sign and a guiding light to pattern his life and conduct in conformity with the intimation given by the Prophet. It must have sunk deep into his heart and shaped his mental attitude and inclinations. He would have taken it as a directive from the Prophet of God, his own grandfather, of whose love and affection he would have rightly been proud of. He would have surely noticed the radiant face of the Prophet and eyes beaming with satisfaction while making that forecast. He would have surely made up his mind to fulfil the expectation and trust reposed in him by the Apostle of God.

The prediction made by the Prophet was consistent with the mild and pacific disposition of Hasan. He was a worthy and

dutiful son who enjoyed affection and confidence of his father, but when 'Uthmān was assassinated he submitted to 'Ali: "Now let these people alone and go anywhere you like, until the Arabs regain their senses and realise their mistake. Then they will search you out even if you are hidden in the hole of a lizard. They will then swear allegiance to you without your asking for it and come importuning to you." Similarly, when 'Ali made up his mind to fight the Syrians and made preparations to set forth from Medina with an army, Hasan appealed to him: "O my father, desist from it for this will cause a great bloodshed of the Muslims and set in motion an unending dispute and conflict amongst them."[13] This conciliatory attitude of Hasan in a matter in which his own father was involved unmistakably points to the prognostication and prayers of the Prophet.

'Ali, however, did not accept the advice tendered by Hasan since he did not want the people to be left in a state of uncertainty: he deemed it his duty to unite the people under one caliphate to do what he considered to be right and to rule out that which he deemed to be unjust and wrong. He considered himself duty-bound to act on the Quranic dictum: *For every one is a goal witherward he turns.*[14]

Hasan's Election as Caliph

As stated earlier 'Ali had declined to nominate anyone as a Caliph to succeed him and preferred to follow the Prophet in leaving the matter to the people.[15] His reply to the people requesting him to nominate his successor was: 'No. I leave you in the way the Prophet had left you. If God desires well of you, He would bring consensus among you on the man best suited for it just as you agreed on the best man after the Prophet.' But the people took the oath of fealty to Hasan on the very day 'Ali was fatally wounded. It was Friday, the 17th of Ramadhan, 40/24th January, 661.[16]

Ibn Kathīr has narrated the incident in greater detail. He writes:

"After 'Ali had died (and Hasan had been elected as

Caliph), Qays b. S'ad b. Ibādah started pressing Hasan to give battle to the Syrians. Hasan was disinclined to take up arms but the people persisted on their demand and gathered round him in numbers larger than they had assembled ever before. At last, he ordered a vanguard of 12,000 troops under Qays b. S'ad to march ahead, himself leading the main force to take the field against Mu'āwiyah and his Syrian army. On reaching Madā'in, he encamped with his men, asking the vanguard to bivouac in the front.

"'While he was camping at Madā'in, someone raised a false cry that Qays has been killed. This excited a mutiny in his troops which started plundering each other; they even dismantled Hasan's tent and in an attempt to snatch away the carpet he was sitting on, injured a number of persons. Hasan also sustained an injury which was fortunately not serious. Hasan got up and made his way to the palace in Madā'in. One, Mukhtār b. Ubayda, whose uncle S'ad b. Mas'ūd happened to be the governor of Madā'in, said to his uncle; 'Should I tell you how to achieve wealth and honour ?' 'What do you mean ?' asked S'ad. 'Arrest Hasan,' said Mukhtār, 'and hand him over to Mu'āwiyah.' But S'ad replied, 'May God confound thee and make thee come to naught. Should I be treacherous to the grandson of the Prophet ?"[17]

Ibn Kathīr continues :

"The Iraqis had elected Hasan with the hope that he would continue hostilities with the Syrians, but their expectation was not fulfilled for which they were themselves responsible. They evaded fighting and disobeyed their leaders. Had they been prudent they would have taken advantage of the great blessing God had bestowed on them through the oath of allegiance taken by them to a son of the Prophet who was an eminent companion, wise, learned and courageous."[18]

"When Hasan noticed that his army was disunited and refractory, he got annoyed and dejected. He wrote a letter to Mu'āwiyah b. Abi Sufyān (who had advanced with his Syrian army to a place known as Maskan) in which he proposed peace on certain conditions. He offered to abdicate in favour of Mu'āwiyah, if the latter accepted those conditions, which would bring the blood-shed among the Muslims to an end. When people came to know of this letter, they agreed to have Mu'āwiyah as their Caliph."[19]

Ibn Kathīr also says :

"The Prophet (peace be upon him) had said that the caliphate would continue for thirty years after him. Hasan abdicated in favour of Mu'āwiyah in Rabi-ul-Awwal 41/July, 661 which marks the end of thirty years after the death of the Prophet."[20]

Mu'āwiyah requested Hasan to address the people after his abdiction. In his valedictory speech Hasan said after praising God and benediction for the Prophet.

"O men, Allah first granted you guidance through our ancestors and saved you from bloodshed through their descendents. Allah had fixed a period of time for it; the world is naught but vicissitudes; fluctuation of fortunes, up for one and down for the other. Remember that Allah told His Prophet to tell you : 'I do not know haply it may be a trial for you, and an enjoyment for a season.'[21]

"This concise yet meaningful speech was taken seriously by Mu'āwiyah who could not dismiss it from his mind for a long time."[22]

Once a man, Abu 'Āmir by name, addressed Hasan, saying, "Peace be on you, O abaser of Muslims," since he had not continued the hostilities with the Syrians. Hasan replied, "Not at all, Abu 'Āmir, I did not debase Muslims. I just disliked that their blood should be shed for the sake of my rule."[23]

After his abdication Hasan retired with his brother Husain

and other members of his family to Medina. Whenever he passed by the quarters of those who had been his followers and supporters, they made caustic remarks against him for abdicating in favour of Mu'āwiyah. But being a man of noble disposition, magnanimous and august he never answered back, nor felt sorry for what he had done. He rather felt satisfied about the correct decision taken by him which had, however, displeased several members of his own family and admirers, and which continues to be a cause of irritation to some to this day. But the fact is that his approach was appropriate and still furnishes an example to be followed by those who may be placed in similar circumstances. He deserves to be paid tribute for preventing further bloodshed of the Muslims as already predicted by the Prophet.[24]

Some of his devoted supporters often used to hail him by saying: 'O Disgrace for the faithful !' Hasan always replied them: 'Disgrace is better than Hellfire.'[25]

Abu Dāwūd al-Tiyālsi relates from Zuhayr b. Nufayr al-Hadhrami, who heard his father as saying: "I said to Hasan b. 'Ali that the people think that you still want to become Caliph." He answered: "I had the Arabs in my hand. They would have made peace or war with whom I made peace or war but I forsook that authority for seeking the pleasure of God. Would I again like to set the neighbourhood of Hijaz on fire !"[26] On another occasion he said: "I was afraid that seventy or eighty thousand men, or near about that number, might be brought before me on the Day of Judgement, with blood flowing from their veins, and they might complain to God against me."[27]

Death of Hasan

Hasan was given poison which caused his death. 'Umayr b. Is'hāq says that he alongwith another man of Quraish called upon Hasan who told him: "I was poisoned several times; each time it was deadlier than the earlier one." He was then in the throes of death.

Husain came to Hasan and sat down on his bed near his

head. He asked Hasan, 'Brother, who poisoned you?' 'Do you want to slay him?' demanded Hasan. On Husain's replying in affirmative, Husain said, 'If he is the man whom I suspect, than God is more severe in taking revenge. But if he is not guilty, then I do not want you to slay an innocent man.'[28]

Hasan's funeral was thronged by people in such numbers that the graveyard of Al-Baqi could hardly accommodate them all. Wāqidi relates from Tha'ulab b. Mālik: 'I was present on the day Hasan died and was buried in the Al-Baqi. The crowd was so huge that if a needle was to be dropped it would have fallen on somebody's head rather than on the ground.'[29]

Hasan was 47 years of age when he died.[30]

He was elected Caliph in place of his father in 41/661. He concluded a treaty of peace with Mu'āwiyah in Rabi-ul-Awwal 41/July 661—the year being known 'Ām al-Jam'āh. His caliphate lasted for six months; the right-guided caliphate came to an end with it after completing 30 years.[31]

The Stand Taken By Hasan

The decision taken by Hasan to make peace with Mu'āwiyah and surrender the caliphate to him was as much timely and correct as the stand subsequently taken by Husain against Yazīd b. Mu'āwiyah. Any incident or happening is the product of peculiar circumstances, time and space which have all to be taken into account in arriving at a correct decision or the manner and means to be adopted to any situation properly. The same type of approach in all situations and circumstances can never be deemed as appropriate. There was a great difference in the character and morals of Mu'āwiyah and Yazīd particularly if we also keep in view the opportunity the former had had in enjoying the guidance of the Prophet and the services he rendered to Islam.

Continued warfare with Mu'āwiyah would have meant endless hostilities and bloodshed of the Muslims. The Muslim society, during his time, rent by internal dissensions and threatened by external threats, was passing through a crisis. These

conditions would have more probably incited a section of the people to raise an insurrection or take resort to intrigue and double-dealing. Hasan knew the people of Iraq better than others. They had backed his father but being impetuous and utterly wanting in perseverance and steadiness, taken flight more than once just before taking the field. The indiscipline, impulsiveness and treachery of these people had many a time deprived Hasan's father from the fruits of his victories and caused him distress which can be seen from his sermons and letters included in the *Nahjul Balāgha*. Hasan had been a witness to all these painful events.

Husain b. 'Ali

Husain b. 'Ali was born on 5th Shab'ān 4/10 January, 626 The Prophet got him lick honey with his own hand, passed his own tongue in his mouth, blessed him and gave him the name Husain. As stated earlier Hasan resembled the Prophet in his facial features while Husain bore a similarity to his grandfater in physique. Husain was of about six and a half years when the Prophet bid farewell to the world on 12 Rabi-ul-Awwal 11 A. H.[32]

Abu Ayyūb Ansāri relates: 'One day I went to the Prophet. Hasan and Husain were both sitting on the Prophet's chest. I said, 'O Apostle of Allah, they are so dear to you.' 'The Prophet replied, 'Why not. These are the flowers I have in this world.'[33] Hārith has reported 'Ali as saying that the Prophet once remarked, 'Hasan and Husain are the leaders of youngmen in Paradise.'[34] Yazīd b. Abi Ziyād has narrated that once the Prophet heard Husain crying. He said to Husain's mother, 'Do you not know that I am distressed to hear him cry?'[35]

Husain had joined the army sent in 51/671 to invade Constantinople. Yazīd b. Mu'āwiyah was also with him.[36] Very particular, as he was, about performance of religious observances like the prayers and fasting, Husain had gone twenty times on pilgrimage to Makkah on foot.[37] He was also very modest. Once when he was going somewhere on a horse, he saw a party of 20 people, all very poor, sitting on the ground and taking bread.

He saluted them. They replied him and requested him to have food with them. Husain alighted from his horse, joined in the meal and recited the Quranic verse : 'Verily, Allah loveth not the proud.' Having finished the meal with them, Husain said to them, 'Brothers, you invited me and I accepted. Now have food with me.' He brought all of them to his house and asked his servant Rubāh to bring for them whatever was available in the house.[38]

Ibn 'Yuaina relates that Abdullāh' b. Abi Yazīd said to him : 'I saw Husain b. 'Ali when the hair on his head and his beard was black except for a few on the upper side of the beard. 'Umar b. 'Atā has reported that he had seen Husain dying his hair with *wasma* (a kind of hair dye). The hair on his head and beard looked completely black.[39]

Accession of Yazīd b. Mu'āwiyah to Kingship

Mu'āwiyah had first nominated Hasan for the caliphate after him although some of his counsellors had suggested him to designate Yazīd as his successor. However, with the death of Hasan, the situation was altered and he began thinking of Yazīd succeeding him. He once suggested the matter to Abdullāh b. 'Umar, saying : 'I am afraid of leaving my subjects uncared for like the flock of sheep and goats in the rain but without any shepherd.'[40] But he found that the proposal was received unfavourably by the people since Yazīd was known to be fond of wasting his time in hunting and similar other diversions. Both Yazīd and Mu'āwiyah thus at first desisted from pursuing the matter because of the adverse reaction of the people.[41] However, in the beginning of year 56/765, Mu'āwiyah started making arrangements for obtaining the oath of fealthy for Yazīd. He communicated his intention to provincial governors who persuaded the people to accept the proposal. Mu'āwiyah went on lesser pilgrimage to Makkah and while passing through Medina on his return journey, asked the people in a speech to accept Yazīd as his successor. Most of the people were brow-beaten into swearing fidelity to Yazīd, but 'Abdur Rahmān b. Abi Bakr,

'Abdullah b. 'Umar, Husain b. 'Ali, 'Abdullah b. Zubayr and 'Abdullah b. 'Abbās, who were sitting near the pulpit, kept quiet; neither they took the oath nor opposed it. Thus, with the general acceptance of Yazīd's nomination, deputations from different parts of the realm made haste to congratulate him.[42]

Character of Yazīd

Tabrāni says that Yazīd was a drunkard in his youthful days and irresponsible like other young men.[43]

Ibn Kathīr reports: 'Yazīd had certain virtues also. He was magnanimous and considerate, a fluent speaker and a poet, brave and shrewd and handsome and courteous. At the same time, he was inclined to laxity and enjoyments. He was irregular in offering prayers or missed them altogether.'[44] What people found most objectionable and which brought him into disrepute was the stigma of being a drunkard, immoral behaviour and certain actions deemed as infringing the *sharī'ah*[45]. He was not accused of being an apostate or heretic but his manner and morals were regarded as profane and impious.[46] It is alleged that he had earned a bad name for his being fond of singing and dancing, drinking, enchantment and hunting. He is also reported to be fond of keeping company with boys and dancing girls, had hounds and took pleasure in the fights af rams, monkeys and bears.[47] Mu'awiyah[48] had got the people to swear allegiance to Yazīd in his life-time to ensure that Yazīd succeeded him. Therefore, when Mu'awiyah died in Rajab, 60/April 680 the oath for him was renewed.[49] He was then about 35 years of age as he is said to have been born sometimes between 25 to 27 A.H.

'Umar b. al-Khattāb, the second Caliph, had once said: 'By the Lord of K'aba, I know when the Arabs will meet their doom. It will be when a man will become their leader, who has neither seen the days of pagan past nor occupied any place of eminence in Islam.[50]

At a time, following the right-guided caliphate, when a number of distinguished companions of Prophet and many more virtuous successors of the first generation of Muslims were still

alive, a man of Yazīd's character and morals came to hold the reigns of government. Many of them were worthy of leading the Muslim community on the path chalked out by Islam. It was the path clearly indicated by the Qur'an and constituted the purpose for which the office of caliphate had been established by Islam. All these factors made the change look abrupt and unsufferable. Had this transformation come about after a pretty long period of time, it would have rendered it less agonising and the people would not have reacted so sharply as they did at that time That the response of the people in later times, when the situation during the reign of some of the Umayyad and 'Abbasid caliphs were no better than that of Yazīd, was not so intense and exceruciating proves the point.

Tragedy of Karbala

Would that it had been possible for me to omit the dercription of this appaling occurrance which is disgraceful enough to put every believer to shame. But the history has to record every event and casualty and no historian can leave out the narration of any mischance and misfortune, howsoever painful it may be for him. Such events become a part of history: their exclusion would render history incomplete and deform evaluation of the course of events. We have therefore no alternative but to narrate these painful happenings with due apology to those who are aware of the reverence every believer owes to the holy Prophet's household and his family.

Husain b. 'Ali refused to swear allegiance to Yazīd and remained adamant on his decision, but the state officials regarded his refusal to be more significant than the rejection of the oath by 'Abdullah b. Umar, 'Abdur Rahmān b. Abi Bakr, 'Abdullah b. Zubayr and a few others, since they were fully cognizant of the prestige and influence Husain commanded owing to his kinship with the holy Prophet. It was also regarded as a sequal to the unfortunate events during the reign of his illustrious father. Husain, too, was firm on his stand and not prepared to deviate from what he considered to be correct and right.

Invitation by the Iraqis

When Husain was pressed hard by Yazīd and his officials to take the oath of fealty to the sovereign he migrated to Makkah. In the meantime he received a large number of letters from the people of Iraq in which they had asked him to come over to Iraq. It is reported that Husain had received about 150 such letters which besought his help stating that one hundred thousand men were willing to give allegiance to him. The Iraqis had exhorted Husain to make haste so that he may take their oath of fealty and release them from the rule of Yazīd. Husain responded by deputing his cousin Muslim b. 'Aqil b. Abi Tālib to let him know of the actual position in Iraq. He also wrote a letter to the leaders of Iraq.

Muslim arrived in Kūfa where he was warmly received and a large number of people not only swore allegiance to Husain but also stated on oath that they would help him with all their might. The number of such adherents swelled from 12 to 18 thousand and then Muslim intimated Husain that he may now reach Kūfa where people were enthusiastic to follow and take the oath of allegiance to him. Husain then decided to start for Iraq. On the other hand, Yazīd deposed the governor of Kūfa, N'omān b. Bashīr, who had a soft corner for Husain, and appointed 'Ubayd Ullah Ibn Ziyād as the governor of Basra and Kūfa.[51]

Treachery of the People of Kūfa

Muslim b. 'Aqīl mounted his horse and with his four thousand Iraqi troops surrounded the governor's palace where 'Ubayd Ullah b. Ziyād had taken shelter along with his colleagues and chieftains of Iraqi tribes. These chieftains persuaded their clansmen, with exhortation and threats, to abandon Muslim b. 'Aqīl. Thereafter 'Ubayd Ullah decided, on the exhortation of certain officials, to go round the city and threaten the people of dire consequeces in the case of their continued support to 'Aqīl. His admonitions had the desired effect in as much as the relations of 'Aqīl's followers, men and women, came out to induce them

to go back to their houses before the Syrian army arrived to massacre them. 'Aqīl's adherents started deserting him until their numbers fell to five hundred and then to three hundred. 'Aqīl had at last 30 persons with him when he led the sun-set (*maghrib*) prayers and started towards the gates of Kanda. Now he had only ten persons with him, who also left him before long and he was left alone without any one to guide him where to go or to seek shelter. Not aware of the streets and lanes of Kūfa, Muslim wandered through the city in the dark not knowing what to do.[52]

The story of Iraqis betrayal of Muslim b. 'Aqīl is both long and saddening. It also shows that man is liable to be impressed more by power and pelf and rank and status than by the noblest values, ideals and principles.[53] At last Muslim b. 'Aqīl had to seek refuge in a house which was surrounded by the hostile people. At first those who had given protection to Muslim b. 'Aqīl tried to defend him against the attackers but later they tried thrice to turn him out of the house. The mob besieging the house started pelting stones and then set fire to a pile of bamboos which caused suffocation to Muslim b. 'Aqīl. There are different reports of the subsequent happening. One says that Muslim b. 'Aqīl came out, sword in his hand, and fought the attackers. According to another version 'Abdur Rahmān, who had given refuge to Muslim, handed him over to his enemies. They snatched his sword and took him away on the back of a mule. Muslime now knew that his end was near; he broke into tears.

Message of Muslim to Husain

Muslim b. 'Aqīl was brought to Ibn Ziyād. After a brief altercation with him Ibn Ziyād got him taken to the top of his palace. Muslim occupied himself all the while in different litanies and supplications. When he had reached the top of the palace one Mukbīr b. Imrān cut off his head and threw it below. Thereafter he hurled down his body also.[54]

Husain had already left Makkah for Kūfa on the day

Muslim had been arrested, or a day earlier to that. Muslim had requested one Muhammad b. Ash'ath to inform Husain, if possible, of what had happened to him and tell him to go back with his household. He had asked to convey his message to Hussain that the people of Kūfa should not be trusted since they were the people who wanted to get rid of his father through his natural death or martyrdom; these people were liars who had duped both of them; and no liar is ever steadfast on his promises. Muhammad b. Ash'ath sent the message through a courier who met Husain at Zabāla, at a distance of four night's journey from Kūfa. He conveyed the message of Muslim to Husain, but he refused to accept the advice, saying: 'Whatever has been destined by God will anyhow come to happen. May Allah retribute us for our resolve and endeavour as well as our perseverance at vileness of the officials.[55]

Before Husain had set off from Makkah, several of his well-wishers had advised him not to go to Kūfa. 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās had told him that the people of Kūfa were deceitful whose promises should never be trusted. He had also asked Husain to remain staying at Makkah and go to Iraq after the Iraqis were able to dispel the enemy from their country. Husain, however, replied that he knew him to be his well-wisher, but he had already made up his mind. 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās further entreated that if he was bent upon going to Iraq he should not take the women and children for he was afraid that he might also be slain like 'Uthmān before the members of his family.[56]

'Abdullāh b. 'Umar also tried to dissuade Husain in a like manner, but when Husain refused to change his decision he embraced Husain and breaking into tears, said: 'I entrust a martyr to the care of Allah.' 'Abdullāh b. Zubayr also tried to persuade Husain not to leave for Kūfa but Husain replied: 'I have been informed that forty thousand people have taken the oath that they would support me or else their wives would be divorced and their slaves deemed as liberated.'[57]

Some distinguished companions of the Prophet like Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri, Jābir b. 'Abdullāh and Sa'eed al-Musayyab

urged Husain not to go to Kūfa but he remained inflexible in his resolve.[58] During his journey Husain met the poet Farzdeq whom he enquired about the situation in Kūfa. He replied; 'O son of the Prophet, their hearts are with you but their swords are against you and the succour descends from heavens.'[59]

Husain in Kūfa

Husain b. 'Ali continued his journey to Kūfa with the members of his family and sixty others, all of whom belonged to that city. He had no information about the developments in Kūfa when he set off from Makkah but the news of Muslim's martyrdom was conveyed to him in the way. He repeatedly recited the Quranic verse : *To Allah do we belong and to Him shall we return*. Certain people said to him : 'Now Allah alone is your protector.' Husain replied to them : 'The life has no charm after him.' On reaching the place called Hājir, he said to those accompanying him : 'My supporters have deserted me. Now who amongst you wants to return can go back. I will have no objection or claim against you.' Many persons around him started pulling out. But these were the Bedouins who had joined his party in the way. He was left only with the people with whom he had started the journey.[60] Now Husain took out two bags full of letters received by him. He took them out and read a few of the letters. Hur, who was present, denied that he or his companions had writien any letter to him. Thereafter he left with his men. In the meantime a few persons from Kūfa arrived. On being asked by Husain about the situation there, Mujamm'a b. 'Abdullāh al-'Āmari said : 'The leading men have united against you since they have been bribed lavishly and given all they had desired. All of them will fight against you. As for the commoners, their hearts are inclined to you but their swords will be against you.'[61]

'Ubayd Ullah b. Ziyād deputed 'Umar b. Sa'd to contact Husain who said; 'O 'Umar, accept one of the three alternatives in regard to me. Either leave me alone so that I may return whence I have come, or conduct me to Yazīd so that I may

surrender to him and he may decide about me, and if it is also not acceptable to you, then let me go to the land of Turks so that I may die fighting with them.' 'Umar communicated the message to Ibn Ziyād who showed his inclination to send on Husain to Yazīd but Shimr Dhi-al-Jaushan intervened to say, "No. He should abide by your orders." The message was again intimated to Husain who refused to agree to the suggestion. 'Umar delayed in opening hostilities with Husain but Ibn Ziyād commissioned Shimr Dhi-al-Jaushan as his lieutenant with the orders that if 'Umar starts fighting with Husain he should help him, otherwise he should put 'Umar to sword and take his place. 'Umar's entourage included about twenty chiefs of Kūfa. They insisted that the conditions proposed by Husain were fair enough and should be conceded. At last all these men changed sides and joined Husain to fight under him.[62]

In Karbala

Ibn Ziyād ordered 'Umar b. S'ad to cut Husain's party off from the waters of Euphrates. Husain, however, instructed his men to allow the horses of the enemy to have access to the waters.[63] Husain then offered mid-day prayers.

'Umar b. S'ad placed Shimr Dhi-al-Jaushan at the head of infantrymen who along with the cavalrymen surrounded Husain's party by the evening of Thursday, the ninth of Muharram. After the nightfall, Husain gave certain advices to his family members and also option to his men to go away if they desired. He said that he was alone the target of the enemy but his brothers and nephews replied that they were loath to remain alive after him for they did not want to witness what they detested about him. The sons of 'Aqil b. Abi Tālib said that their lives and their belongings and their kinsmen were ready to die fighting for him. They were prepard to face any evantuality and liked their end to be the same as Husain's. They said that it would be disgraceful to remain alive after him.[64]

The pre-dawn prayer was performed by Husain on Friday (others relate that it was Saturday), which was the tenth day of

Muharram. He had with him 32 cavalrymen and 40 foot soldiers. He mounted his horse and placed a copy of the Qur'ān before him. His son 'Ali b. Husain (Zainul 'Ābidīn) was sick and weak. He also made preparations to take part in the fight. Husain came forward and addressed the enemy troops telling them who he was, whose son and grandson he happened to be; what position he occupied; and whether it was meet and just for them to fight the grandson of the Prophet.[65] Hur b. Yazid al-Riyāhi left the enemy to join Husain and fought alongwith him until he was killed.

In the meantime Shimr advanced with his men and attacked Husain and his party. They engaged the enemy in ones or twos, Husain continued praying God for them and saying : "Allah may reward you with the best of rewards for the God-conscious." They fall dead fighting before him one by one. Many amongst the cousins and nephews of Husain were killed

Shimr Dhi-al-Jaushan said to his men in full cry, "What is the delay now in doing away with Husain." Zar'a b. Sharīk al-Tamīmi advanced and bore down with his sword on the shoulder of Husain. Simultaneously Sinān b. Anas b. 'Amr al-Nakhyi came at him with his lance. Sinān now dismounted from his horse, severed Husain's head and threw it towards a man named Khauli. Abu Makhnaf related after Husain was dead that he saw his body bore marks of 33 cuts by lances and 34 by other weapons.[66]

The number of martyrs who laid down their lives with Husain was 72. Muhammad b. Hanafiyah relates that 17 of the martyrs were the progeny of Fātima, the daughter of the Prophet.[67] The day on which this tragedy befell was Friday, the 10th of Muharram, 61/10th of October 680. Husain was then 54 years and six and a half months of age.

In the Court of Yazīd

Hishām says that when the head of Husain was brought before Yazīd, his eyes got filled with tears. He said to his courtiers : "I would not have admonished you if you had not killed Husain.

May Allah curse Ibn Sumayyah. By God, had I been there, I would have forgiven him "[68]

An emancipated slave of Mu'āwiyaḥ b. Abi Sufyān relates : "When the head of Husain was placed before Yazīd, I heard him saying weepingly : 'Had there been a kinship between Ibn Ziyād and Husain, he would not have done it "[69]

The women of Husain's family and his ailing son 'Ali were conducted before Yazīd. At first he talked to them in a harsh tone, but he soon relented and treated them kindly. He sent them to his own palace to live with his family and then sent them back to their home as his honoured guests. But there is nothing to show that he reprimanded or deposed or gave any other punishment to Ibn Ziyād.

There are, however, certain other reports to the effect that Yazīd showed delight or mocked on that occasion. If true, it was unbecoming of a Muslim.

Sack of Medina

An army sent by Yazīd was given battle by the people of Medina at a place called Harrah in 63/682. The Medinites were defeated with terrible loss. Yazīd allowed the commander of his army Muslim b. 'Uqba to do whatever he liked in Medina for three days. Ibn Kathīr writes :

> "It is difficult to narrate the revolting atrocities perpetrated in the city of the Prophet during these three days. Yazīd wanted to remove every trace of an obstacle to his kingdom and strengthen it but God rendered all his efforts futile and he failed to achieve his ends.[70]
>
> "Yazīd did not live long after this incident. His reign lasted only for four years and he died on the 13th of Rabi al-Awwal, 64/9th November 683. "[71]

With Yazīd ended the rule of the Abi Sufyān's branch. It was transferred to Marwān b. Hakam[72] and ultimately to the 'Abbāsids.

Sunnite view of the Incident

The Sunnites constituting the major sect of Islam and its

eminent scholars have always held the action of Yazīd and his lieutenants like 'Ubaydullah b. Ziyād, 'Umar b. S'ad and Shimr Dhi-al-Jaushan as most abhorrent and disgusting and disavowed the crime. They have also expressed their grief and mourning at the cruel killing of Husain and the members of his family. It is neither possible nor necessary to cite here the views of all the distinguished scholars belonging to the sect, but a few are given here by way of illustration.

Sālih b. Ahmad relates from his father Ahmad b. Hanbal:

> 'I said to my father that certain persons alleged that he held Yazīd in esteem. He replied, 'My son, can anyone who has faith in Allah and the Day of Judgement admire Yazīd?' I said again: 'Then why do you not curse him?' He replied: 'My son, have ever seen your father calling down curses on the head of any one?' [73]

In a conversation with Bulā'i, the Tartar ruler, which Ibn Taimiyah had with him at Damascus, he told Bulā'i that "the curse of Allah and His angels and all the men may rest on those who shed the blood of Husain or assisted in the crime or approved of it. May Allah not abate their torment nor give any respite to them."[74]

Ibn Taimiyah further says:

> "Allah honoured Husain with martyrdom and disgraced those who took his life or assisted in the misdeed or assented to it. Husain was a paradigm of the earlier martyrs of Islam since he and his brother are the leaders of the youth in paradise. They had been brought up during the initial period of the rise of Islam and so they had been deprived of migration and sufferings for the cause of Islam and the perseverance undergone by their predecessors. Therefore Allah blessed them with martyrdom and raised them in honour and esteem and enhanced their status. His martyrdom was a grievous tragedy. Allah has instructed us to recite: *To Allah do we belong and to Him shall we return*, on the occasion of afflictions, and also said in the Qur'ān:

"And give thou glad tidings to the patient who, when they are visited by an affliction, say: Surely, we belong to Allah and to Him shall we return. Upon those rest blessings and mercy from their Lord, and those – they are the truly guided."[75]

Ahmad b 'Abdul Ahad popularly known as Mujaddid Alf Thāni writes in one of his letters

"Deprived of divine grace, Yazīd was one of the profane. If curses are not sent down upon him it is because the accepted way of the *ahl-i-Sunnat* is not to curse anyone. Even if one happens to be disbeliever, no haste should be made in cursing him unless it is known for certainty that he met his doom with disbelief, such as, Abu Lahab and his wife. But it does not mean that Yazīd does not deserve to be cursed for God has said: Those who hurt God and His Messenger—then God has cursed them in the present world and the world to come."[76]

An eminent traditionist of Delhi, 'Abdul Haq (b. 1052/1642) writes in the ***Takmīl al-Imān***.

"In short, Yazīd is one of the most accursed man in our view. The crimes committed by the tyrant would not have been perpetrated by any other Muslim."[77]

Shāh Waliullah Delhavi (b. 1176/1762) writes in connection with a forecast by the Prophet about the rise of the people inviting others to wickedness.

"Yazīd won over the people to wickednes in Syria and Mukhtār in Iraq."[78]

Rashīd Ahmad of Gangoh, an eminent scholar, has discussed the issue of cursing Yazīd in great detail. He has reached the conclusion that:

"Thus the admissibility and prohibition of sending down curses depends on historical versions. We who are followers (of juristic schools of the Sunnites) deem it safer to remain silent on the issue because if the cursing is admissible, there is no harm in not doing so. Sending down curses (on someone) is neither obligatory, nor

necessary, nor the way of the Prophet, nor yet commendable, but simply allowed. Since a situation may not warrant such an action, it would be unwise to commit this sin inadvertantly."[79]

Reformative Efforts

The Islamic state after the first four Caliphs known as the right-guided caliphate, made a departure from the republican principle. Unfortunately it adopted the hereditary system of kingship under which the son or a member of the sovereign's family ascended the throne. The Arabs, of all Muslims, thus, became the subjects of the Umayyad or 'Abbāsid caliphs. No-body had the courage, nor there was any possibility of success to challenge the authority of these caliphs Only those belonging to a noble lineage and enjoying the support of all Muslims by virtue of their piety and virtuous character could dare defy these powerful sovereigns.

This was the reason why those who raised a banner of revolt against the Umayyads or the 'Abbāsids and invited the people to reform and revivify the faith belonged to the lineage of the Prophet or were descendants, of 'Ali through his other wives. These were the people who were genuinely concerned about the errant ways of the administrative system, disappearance of the true spirit of caliphate and revival of the pagan structure under which all the resources of the state were channelised for the luxury and indulgence of the chosen few.

Zayd,[80] the grandson of Husain, gave a call of *Jihād* against the Umayyad Caliph Hishām b. 'Abdul Malik in 122/741 but was impaled on cross. Abu Hanīfa, founder of one of the four juristic schools among the Sunnites helped him with ten thousand dirhams but did not join the uprising.[81]

Thereafter Muhammad[82], a grandson of Hasan, whose noble and pure character had obtained for him the name of Dhu al-Nafs-al-Zakīya, or the pure soul, took up arms against the 'Abbasid Caliph Mansūr in Medina, while his brother Ibrāhim proclaimed deposition of Mansūr at Basra. Abu Hanīfa and

Mālik b. Anas, the founders of the two of the great schools of law among the Sunnites pronounced juristic opinion upholding the validity of Muhammad's claim and also assisted him financially. Abu Hanīfa even advised Hasan b. Qahtaba, a military general of Mansūr, not to fight against Muhammad Abu Hanīfa earned the enmity of Mansūr which later cost him his life.

Ibn Kathīr records in his *Tā ikh al-Kāmil* that Mālik b. Anas was asked whether it was permissible for those to fight for Muhammad although they had been forced earlier to take the oath of allegiance to Mansūr. Mālik b. Anas had then pronounced the juristic opinion that an oath taken under duress was not binding. A number of people left Mansūr to fight under the banner of Muhammad, although Mālik b Anas did not himself took any active part in the conflict.[83] The heroic fight closed with the death of Muhammad in Ramadhan 145/December, 763 and his brother Ibrāhim was killed two months later.

These efforts failed because the governments against which these uprisings were directed were very strong and well-equipped. History can furnish many examples where such movements have failed in spite of sincere leadership and their zealous supporters. Their failure was also not strange because the law of nature requires material prowess for the success of such undertakings but despite their lack of success on the political plane they did play a memorable role in the revival of Islamic spirit to fight against injustice. Had such occurrences not taken place from time to time, Islamic history would have been reduced to an uninterrupted tale of despotism and tyranny of absolute and selfish sovereigns. These altruistic and daring leaders and their brave followers staked their lives to create lighthouses of guidance for the coming generations. These beacons of faith are like flashes of light in darkness of the past which remind us of ideals of Islam and impart courage to fight the evil. Their endeavours constitute a valuable patrimony, a source of pride for every Muslim who derives certitude and confidence and zeal to re-establish true faith and practice whenever there is any deviation from the right path "Among the believers are those who

were true to their covenant with God; some of them have fulfilled their vow by death, and some are still awaiting."[84]

Notes and References

1. Ibn Kathīr, 'Imād-ud-dīn Ismā'il b. Umar, *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah*, Beirut, 1966, Vol. VIII, p. 33.
2. 'Abdur Razzāq, *Musannaf*, Dhabel, 1970.
3. Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, p. 33
4. *Ibid*, Vol. VIII, p. 37.
5. *Ibid*, Vol. VIII, p. 39.
6. *Ibid*, Vol. VIII, pp. 37-39.
7. *Ibid*, Vol. VIII, pp. 37-39.
8. Bukhāri, *Al-Jāmi'i al-Sahīh*, Kitāb al-Fitan.
9. Ibn Hajar, *Al-Isābah, op. cit*, Vol. I, p. 230.
10. *Al-Jawāharata, op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 203.
11. Abu Nua'ym Isfahāni, Ahmad b. 'Abdullāh, *Hilyatul Auliya, op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 35.
12. 'Abdul Qādir Badrān, *Tahzib Tārikh Damishq al-Kabīr*, Beirut 1399/1979, Vol. IV, pp. 217-218.
13. Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VII, pp 229-230.
14. Q 2 : 148. The verse was revealed on the occasion of appointment of a distinctive *qiblah* for the Muslims but it can also be interpreted to mean that even those who are sincere and possess the ability to chart their course of action, may have different views on the stages of spiritual attainment.
15. Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, p. 14.
16. *Ibid*, Vol. VIII, p. 14.
17. *Ibid*, Vol. VIII, p. 14.
18. *Ibid*, Vol. VIII, p. 16.
19. *Ibid*, Vol. VIII, p. 16.
20. *Ibid*, Vol. VIII, p. 16.
21. 21. Q. 21 : 111.
22. Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, p. 18.
23. *Ibid*, Vol. VIII, p. 19.
24. *Ibid*, Vol. VIII, p. 19.
25. *Ibid*, Vol. VIII, p. 41.
26. *Ibid*, Vol. VIII, p. 42.
27. *Ibid*, Vol. VIII, p. 42.
28. *Ibid*, Vol. VIII, p. 42.
29. Ibn Hajar, *Al-Isābah, op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 231.
30. Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, p. 44.

31. Al-Tilmisani, *Al-Jawahir*, *op. cit.*, p. 204.
32. Ibn Kathir, *Al-Bidāyah*, *op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, pp. 149-50.
33. *Al-Mu'ajjam*, on the authority of Tabrāni.
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Ibid.*
36. *Al-Bidāyah*, *op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, p. 151.
37. *Al-Jawāharata*, *op cit.*, Vol. II, p. 231.
38. *Ibid*, pp. 213-14.
39. *Siyar al-'Ālām*, *op , cit.*, Vol. III, p. 281.
40. *Al-Bidāyah*, Vol. VIII, p. 80.
41. *Ibid*, p. 80.
42. *Ibid*, p. 80
43. *Ibid*, p. 228.
44. *Ibid*, p. 230.
45. *Ibid*, p. 232.
46. *Ibid*, p. 232.
47. *Ibid*, p. 235.
48. All historians are unanimous that Mu'āwiyah died at Damascus in Rajab, 60/April, 680 when he was 78 years of age or, according to some, crossed even 80. (Ibn Kathir *Al-Bidāyah*, *op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, p. 143).
49. *Ibid*, p. 226.
50. *Al-Bidāyah*, *op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, p. 232.
51. *Ibid*, p. 152.
52. *Ibid*, pp. 154-155.
53. The people of Iraq with whom Muslim and Husain had to deal with consisted, by and large, of emancipated slaves, newly converted Muslims and the tribals of Eastern Arabia who had still not imbibed the spirit of Islam. Having been subjects of the absolute and hedonic Sassanid empire for a long time, the people of Iraq had become sycophants and self-seekers, individually and collectively. This Iraqian character manifested itself in the struggle in which one had to choose between material benefits and the morals and principles.
54. *Al-Bidāyah*, *op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, pp. 156-57.
55. *Ibid*, Vol. VIII, p. 159.
56. *Ibid*, Vol. VIII, p. 160.
57. *Ibid*, Vol. VIII, p. 161.
58. *Ibid*, Vol. VIII, pp. 160-62.
59. *Ibid*, Vol. VIII, p. 167.
60. *Ibid*, Vol. VIII, p. 169.
61. *Ibid*, Vol. VIII, p. 173.
62. *Ibid*, Vol. VIII, p. 170.

63. *Ibid*, Vol. VIII, pp. 175-78. Several historians have related that Husain was not cut off from the waters of Euphrates. This is confirmed by subsequent events. He had free access to water and allowed its use to the enemy also.
64. *Ibid*, Vol. VIII. p. 176-77.
65. *Ibid*, Vol. VIII, pp. 178-79.
66. *Ibid*, Vol. VIII, p. 188. It is notable that all those who had taken an active part in killing Husain, were similarly dealt with. Later on, Mukhtār (notwithstanding his other faults and faillings) pursued and killed them.
67. Ibn Kathir, *Al-Bidayah*, Vol. VIII, p. 189.
68. *Ibid*, Vol. VIII, p. 191.
69. *Ibid*, Vol. VIII, p 171.
70. *Ibid*, Vol. VIII, p 222.
71. *Ibid*, Vol. VIII, p. 2'6.
72. Mu'āwiyah b. Yazīd succeeded his father. The oath of allegiance in his favour was taken on 14th Rabi-al-Awwal 64/10th November, 683. He was pious and mild but he wielded the scepter only for a short period. He retired to private life, fell ill and died at the age of 21 (or a bit less as reported by others). The Umayyads assembled and swore allegiance to Marwān b. Hakam on the 3rd Dhi Q'ada, 64/22 June, 684 but he died a year later. He was succeeded by 'Abdul Malik b. Marwān. The Marwan's branch continued to rule for a long time until the 'Abbāsids wrested power from them and ruled for several centuries.
73. Ibn Tamiyah, *Fatāwah Ibn Taymiyah*, Riyadh, 1381 AH, Vol. IV, p. 483.
74. *Ibid*, Vol. IV, p. 487.
75. *Ibid*, Vol. IV, p. 511 (Q. 2 : 155-57)
76. Ahmad Sirhindi, *Maktūbāt Imām Rabbāni*, Amritsar, 1329 A.H. Vol I, p. 60.
77. 'Abdul Haq Bukhāri, Sheikh, *Takmīl al-Imām*, Lucknow. 1905 p. 71.
78. Shāh Waliullah, *Hujjat Allāh il Bāligha*, Lahore n.d , Vol. II, p. 213.
79. Rashīd Ahmad Gangohi, *Fatāwah Rashīdiyah*, Deoband, Saharanpur n d., p. 39.
80. Zayd b. Ali b. Husain.
81. *Manāqib Abu Hanīfa*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 55.
82. Muhammad b. 'Abdullāh b. Hasan. b. 'Ali.
83. Ibn Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fi-al-Tārīkh*, Beirut, 1399 A.H., Vol. V, p. 251.
84. Q. 33 : 23.

XI

THE VIRTUOUS DESCENDANTS OF 'ALI

The tragedy of Karbala brought shame upon Muslims for all times to come and disgraced the then ruler and all those who had sided with him for ever. The life of 'Ali's descendants gradually returned to its normal course, to the way of life led by their illustrious ancestors. Nobility of character, high aspirations and lofty standards of virtue, supplications and nightly vigils, disregard for the present world and deepest anxiety for success in the world to come and ceaseless effort for purification of morals and perfection of spirit became the hallmark of these men of God Their lives are paradigms of virtuous living which have a lesson for people who want to improve their morals and develop true spiritually A few instances of their way of life as preserved by history are given here to demonstrate the sublime standards set by them.

S'eed b. al-Musayyib relates : 'I have not seen a man more God-fearing than 'Ali b. Husain (Zainul 'Ābidīn).'[1]

Imām Zuhri says : 'I have not seen a man of Quraish more virtuous than him ' Zuhri was unable to control himself from shedding tears whenever the name of 'Ali b. Husain was mentioned before him. He remarked on an occasion : 'He was really *Zainul 'Ābidīn* i. e., an adornment for worshippers.'[2]

'Ali b. Husain who had obtained for him the name of

Zainul 'Abidīn, used to go out in the night with a bag full of bread in order to distribute them to the poor and indigent.[3]

Jarīr says that after 'Ali b. Husain died, marks of the bag he used to carry regularly to distribute bread to the needy were seen on his back.[4]

Shayba relates that it was discovered after the death of 'Ali b. Husain that he used to maintain a hundred destitute families of Medina. Muhammad b. Is'hāq narrates that a number of people in Medina did not know who provided sustenance to them. They found it out that it was 'Ali b. Husain after he had died.[5]

'Ali b. Husain used to offer a thousand *rak ats* of prayer every day. So God-fearing he was that a gale was sufficient to make him stunned.[6]

'Abdul Ghaffār b. Qāsim relates: "Once 'Ali b. Husain was coming out of a mosque. A man standing there cursed him which made his servants and followers rush at the man. 'Ali forbade them and went to the man, saying, 'Many things about me are not known to you, but tell me if you want anything that can be provided by me.' The man felt ashamed. Thereafter, 'Ali took off his robe and gave it to him alongwith one thousand *dinārs*. Whenever that man saw 'Ali b. Husain after this incident, he used to say: 'I bear witness that you are a son of the Prophet.'[7]

Once 'Ali b. Husain had a few guests. He asked his slave to bring food quickly for them. He rushed to the first storey of the house to bring roasted meat pierced in a hot iron bar. While he was coming down the iron bar fell on one of Ali's sons sitting under the stairs who died instantly. Instead of showing any signs of anger 'Ali said to the slave, 'You have not done it deliberately. Go away, for I liberate you.' Thereafter he got busy in making preparations for the burial of the child.[8]

'Ali b. Husain was born in 38/658 to Salāfa, the daughter of Yazdgard, the last Iranian Emperor.[9] He died in 94/713 at Medina and was buried by the side of his uncle Hasan's grave. He was the only surviving son of Husain to preserve the lineage

of his father.

Muhammad al-Bāqir was the son of 'Ali b. Husain. Muhammad's son was J'afar (as-Sādiq i. e. the truthful) and Mūsa b. J'afar was his grandson who was also known as Mūsa al-Kāzim. Mūsa's son 'Ali al-Raza was, like his forefather, modest, magnanimous, pious and forthright. 'Amr b. al-Miqdām says that a mere glance at the face of Abu J afar Muhammad al-Bāqir was enough to convince anyone that he was a descendant of the Prophet.[10] J'afar b. Muhammad as-Sādiq led a retired life, passing his time in prayers and remembrance of God and was averse to fame and popularity.[11] Imām Mālik says that he used to call upon J'afar b. Muhammad who always met him with a smiling face. However, the moment the name of the Prophet was mentioned before him, he used to turn pale or blue. He further says that he continued calling upon J'afar for a considerably long time but always found him engaged in either of three tasks : performing voluntary prayers, keeping fasts or reciting the Qur'ān. He never narrated anything from the Prophet without first performing ablution and never intervened in anything with which he was not concerned. He was God-fearing and pious and led a frugal life.[12]

Of noble and kindly disposition, Mūsa al-Kāzim[13] was extremely generous. Whenever he came to know about anyone talking ill of him, he sent him some money which sometimes amounted to as much as a thousand *dinārs*.[14] He normally used to keep ready with him pouches containing 400, 300 or 200 *dinārs* for giving them away to the needy in Medina. His son 'Ali al-Raza had been appointed as the crown prince by the 'Abbāsid Caliph Māmūn al-Rashīd. Mūsa al-Kāzim was born in 153/770 and he died on the last day of Safar, 202/18th August 817. His funeral prayer was led by Caliph Māmūn al-Rashīd who got him laid to rest near the grave of his own father, the late Caliph Hārūn ar-Rashīd, in Tūs (now called Mashhad).

The descendants of Hasan were equally pious and godly souls. The well-known historian Ibn 'Asākir has given a detailed description of the exemplary morals and character of

Hasan Muthanna, the son of Hasan in the *Tarīkh Damishq al-Kabīr*.[15]

'Abdullāh, son of Hasan Muthanna, commonly known as 'Abdullāh al-Mahez[16], was one of the scholars of *hadīth* enjoying an eminent position among the successors of the Prophet's companions. Wāqidi says that he spent much of his time in devotions. Endowed with an impressive personality he was a fluent speaker and commanded great respect among his contemporaries. Mus'ab b. 'Abdullāh relates that he had not seen anyone being held in higher esteem by the scholars than 'Abdullāh al-Mahez. Rab'īah' exclaimed when he heard him speaking : 'I bear witness that only the Prophet's progeny can speak in this manner.'

Once a few people including the celebrated scholar and traditionist Ayyūb were sitting Somebody came and saluted them. Ayyūb turned towards the man, responded to him very politely and paid all attention to him with tears brimming in his eyes. Those who saw him holding the man in such reverence asked who he was. Ayyūb replied, 'The Prophet's son 'Abdullāh b. Hasan.'[17]

Ibn Kathīr is on record that 'Abdullāh al-Mahez was extremely courteous to scholars and was himself very dignified, solemn and godly-minded. Another scholar Yahyā describes him as a man commanding great respect and confidence of the people from whom several traditionists including Sufyān Thauri, Darāwardi and Mālik have related *hadīth*. He died perhaps in the year 145/762.[18]

Muhammad, the son of 'Abdullāh al-Mahez was a man of great perseverence and high aspirations, had a majestic bearing, was brave[19] and given to devotional exercises He had obtained for him the titles of al-Mahdi and al-Nafs al-Zakīya (the Pure Soul).[20] He was the epitome of Bani Hāshim and the Prophet's household who never allowed anyone to bear any hardship on account of them. When he confronted the army of Caliph Mansūr in Medina and was convinced of his defeat, he burnt the register containing the names of persons who had sworn allegiance to him lest they might be put to hardship for supporting

him.[21]

Salflessness

These purer souls belonging to the family of the Prophet were always extremely careful of not taking the least advantage of their noble descent. They deemed it unbecoming of them to derive any material benefit out of it. We find people belonging to a celebrated family, clan or caste behaving in a way as if they were sacred and holy or some sort of super-natural beings to whom the common standards of morality and law did not apply. But the behaviour of the descendants of the Prophet, as recorded by history, presents a completely different picture from that of the Brahmins as well as Iranian and Christian priests. The priestly class all over the world had generally taken itself as exclusively ordained ministers of religion, deemed itself as blessed and consecrated and considered it below its dignity to engage in manual labour, trade or calling to earn its living. This way of thought and behaviour can be witnessed even today.

Once Hasan b. 'Ali went to purchase anything from the market. He asked the price which was told by the shopkeeper. Hasan had yet to purchase it when the shopkeeper somehow came to know who the purchaser was. He reduced the price in deference to him as the grandson of the Prophet. But Hasan did not like to avail of the concession and returned, saying : 'I do not want to take the least advantage of my kinship with the Prophet.'

Juwayriyah was the personal attendant of Zainul 'Abidīn. He relates that his master never availed of any concession, even of a *dirham*, on account of his relationship with the Prophet.[22] He never disclosed his identity whenever he went out on a journey. On being asked the reason for it he replied : 'I do not want to take any benefit on account of my relationship with the Prophet, particularly because I will be unable to recompense that while I am travelling.'[23] Similar was the practice of 'Ali Raza b.Mūsa al-Kāzim who never let anybody know about him on such occasions.[24]

Dislike for Laudation

All these descendants of the Prophet were always very reticent in expressing their relationship with the Prophet since they disliked that any exaggerated view of their kinship, similar to the priestly classes in other religions, be taken by others. Yahya b. Sa'eed relates that once certain persons started paying tribute to Zainul 'Ābidīn. He could not control himself and said: 'Love and respect for us should be for the sake of God and on the basis of our common faith. I find that you are giving expression to such sentiments of love and praise for me which put me to shame.'[25] Khalaf b. Haushab reports that once Zainul 'Ābidīn said: 'O people of Iraq and Kūfa! Love me on account of Islam and do not exalt me in a way that I do not deserve'.[26] Zainul 'Abidīn is also related to have once said: 'We, members of the Prophet's household submit to God on the occasion of joy or a thing liked by us and praise Him in the case of a calamity or a thing disliked by us'.[27]

Similarly when a man was speaking highly of Hasan Muthanna, the latter said to him: 'Man! Love us only on account of God. Deal with us, if we obey Him; keep away from us, if we disobey Him. If Allah had any consideration for kinship He would have accorded redemption to parents for the sake of their children. Say only that about us which is right and just since this is sufficient for you and we shall be well pleased with you for it.'[28] On another occasion he said to those who were extolling him: 'O creatures of Allah! Have concern with us or love us if we obey God and for the sake of obedience to God, but if we disobey God, keep away from us because of our sins'.[29]

The progeny of the Prophet was always keen to bring about unity in the ranks of Muslims. 'Abdullāh Ibn Muslim b. Bābak (alias Bābki, a colleague of Zayd b. 'Ali) relates: "Once I went to Makkah with Zayd b. 'Ali. In the middle of night when the pole-star was fully illuminated, Zayd b. 'Ali said: 'O Bābki, do you see this star? Do you think anybody can reach it?' I said, 'No'. Zayd said thereupon, 'By God, I desire that my hands

touch it and it falls down crushing me into pieces and in return Allah brings unity and harmony among the Muslims !"[30]

Laudation of the First Three Caliphs

They always publicly acknowledged the services rendered to the cause of Islam and the debt Muslims owe to the first three caliphs. Yahya b. Sa'eed relates that a few persons from Iraq called upon 'Ali b. Husain (Zainul 'Abidīn) and uttered something improper in regard to the first three caliphs. When they had finished, Zainul 'Abidīn said : 'I bear witness that you are not of the people about whom God says in the Qur'ān : 'And those who came (into the faith) after them say : 'Our Lord ! Forgive us and our brethren who were before us in the faith, and place not in our hearts any rancour towards them who believe. Our Lord ! Thou art full of Pity, Merciful.'[31] Now go away from here. God may do whatever he likes with you.'"[32]

'Urwa b. 'Abdullāh reports : "Once I asked Muhammad al-Bāqir about ornamentation of swords. He replied that there was no harm in it since Abu Bakr al-Siddīq had also done it'. I rejoined : 'You also call him al-Siddīq'. He got up immediately and facing the Qibla said : 'Yes, I call him al-Siddīq and whoever does not recognise him as al-Siddīq, may God not make him truthful in this world and the hereafter."[33]

Maula Jābir al-J'afi narrates that when he took leave from Muhammad al-Bāqir the latter said to him : "Tell the people of Kūfa that I am quit of those who disown Abu Bakr and 'Umar."[34]

Muhammad b. Is'hāq says that Muhammad al-Baqīr once observed : "He is ignorant of the *sunnah* who is not aware of the merits of Abu Bakr and 'Umar."[53]

Abu Khālid al-Ahmar says : "I asked 'Abdullāh al-Mahez b. Hasan al-Muthanna about Abu Bakr and 'Umar. He replied , "May Allah have mercy on both. Whoever does not invoke God's blessings on them, may Allah not grant His blessings to him." Then he added : "I do not expect God to listen to his repentance who imprecates them." Abu Khālid also relates that

on being reminded of the assassination of 'Uthman, 'Abdullāh al-Mahez wept so bitterly that his beard and a part of his shirt were drenched with it.[36]

Their Soldierly Conduct and Valour

The descendants of the Prophet and 'Ali had inherited the valour and heroic qualities which were the distinguishing qualities of the Prophet's household, particularly 'Ali and Husain. Each one of them took the path of truth dauntlessly without giving the least thought to the difficulties and perils of the way; they endeavoured with indomitable courage to keep the Muslims on the path of virtue.

A mention has already been made of the rising of Zayd b. 'Ali b. Husain against the Umayyed Caliph Hishām b. 'Abdul Malik and Muhammad b. 'Abdullāh al-Mehez (Dhu al-Nafs al-Zakīyah) along with his brother Ibrāhīm against the 'Abbāsid Caliph Mansūr. They kept up this tradition in different periods of Islamic history. Sometimes they fought an absoulte and unjust ruler, at others they waged war against the infidel powers in Asia and Africa. In short, they always remained in the fore-front of such struggles with innumerable heroic deeds to their credit. This is a subject that still needs the pen of a historian with encyclopaedic knowledge.[37]

The chivalry and manly spirit exhibited by these paragons of virtue belies the picture drawn by those who claim to be their adherents and adorers. They cross all limits in order to present their own mistaken view and paint them as timid and frightened fellows, trying to hide their faith and real intentions and following a policy of dissimulation and compromise, not merely as a political strategy but as a means to achieve the pleasure of God and as an act of worship. They claim that the progeny of 'Ali tried to conceal the true tenets of faith from the followers of Islam, had no zeal to make Islam dominant and fought shy of facing any danger.

The portrait of the Alids drawn in such works, apparently to highlight their virtues and merits, is little different from the

freemasonry, the Brothers of Purity[38] and other underground movements which came into existence at different times and some still exist in various countries

The characterisation of these noble souls by their so-called votaries does not enkindle the sentiment to restore and strengthen the true faith which has many a time changed the course of Islamic history and given courage and confidence to the followers of Islam in its darkest hour during the last fourteen hundred years.

Preaching of Islam

Nobody can claim that every individual tracing his descent from the Prophet through 'Ali was godly and impeccable or a zealous preacher of Islam, since there are always exceptions to a rule. Many other Muslims families or clans have a proud record of giving birth to scholars and men of God and several of them had attained such a spiritual perfection that the descendants of the Prophet deemed it an honour to be guided by them. The fact, however, remains that the path of virtue and goodness betaken by the earlier descendants of the Prophet continued, by and large, to be a distinguishing feature of their later generations. They also did not remain indifferent to the social and religious needs and problems of the Muslims of their time (as some claiming to be their ardent followers would like to us to believe), nor did they remain lazy drones like the priestly class of certain other religions. As active members of the society they were second to none in the struggles and sacrifices required to be made for their faith.

The Alids, both Hasanis and Husainis, have rendered valuable service in the preaching of Islam in all ages and have caused Islam to capture the hearts of the people in far flung regions where nobody had earlier heard of Islam or the name of the Prophet. They have converted the entire populations of different countries to Islam and made the faith so entrenched in their soil that Islam has become their dominant religion and produced innumerable scholars and men of God. Berbers of north Africa,

a contumacious people deemed as uncontrolable, were converted to Islam by the Alids who inspired them with unbounded confidence and won their attachment to Islam.[39] Similarly, Islam was spread in Kashmir, which is still a Muslim majority State in India, by the Syed 'Ali b Shihāb al-Hamadāni (d 786/1384).[40]

In the same way Alids played a distinguished role in spreading Islam in South East Asia including Indonesia. L. W. S. Findon who has traced the origin of Islam in that part of the world holds the view that these countries were attracted to Islam owing to the progeny of the Prophet who converted the Hindu rajas of Java to Islam. Although other Arabs had reached there from Hadarmaut, they were unable to wield much influence. The real preachers were the descendants of the Prophet who brought their religion to that region.

Sultān Barakāt, a descendant of Husain, spread Islam in Sarawāk.[41] As the history of these islands shows Alids belonging to the lineage of Husain who had settled in Hadarmaut carried on trade with that Island. Their frequent visits brought about the conversion of the natives to Islam.

In a seminar held in Indonesia on 8th Dhil Hijja 1382/30th April 1962 on the causes responsible for dissemination of Islam in those Islands, the collective opinion expressed by the participants in the discussion was that Alids of Hadarmaut, belonging to the Shāfeite school, spread Islam in Indonesia. Similarly, a group of Alids took the message of Islam to Phillipine and helped to develop it in the social, cultural and political fields. The descendants of the Prophet also spread Islam in the islands between Indonesia to Madagascar on the one hand and from Malaya (Malaysia) to Solo on the other.[42]

Quite a large number of spritual guides were the descendants of the Prophet who endeavoured for the purification of spirit and morals of the people and guided them on the path of attaining propinquity to God. It was through their efforts that innumerable people inculcated awe of God, took the path of *sunnah* and liberated themselvess from self-indulgence, pride, arrogance and

similar moral vices. They were eminently successful in calling people back to God and attained such popularity that often the kings and emperors envied the fame and esteem earned by them.

In this short account it would be difficult even to mention the names of all these godly souls. Shaikh 'Abdul Qādir Jīlani[43] (470-561/1077-1166), however, deserves to be mentioned here for his miraculous success in reviving the fervour of faith among the masses and infusing the spirit of God-consciousness and self-purification in them which still remains unparalleled. His sermons reawakened the people to the need of revitalizing the true faith and morals, restoration of *tauhīd* in its correct form and taking to the path of virtue and goodness in a way that the entire world of Islam was reanimated as if by a new life. Shaikh 'Umar al-Kaysāni says: 'After every sermon delivered by Shaikh 'Abdul Qādir some Jew or Christian embraced Islam, a murderer, a bandit or a crook or an evil-doer repented of his sins, or an irreligious person gave up his profane beliefs. The number of bandits and freebooters who repented on his hands was over a hundred thousand.'[44]

The disciples of Shaikh 'Abdul Qādir carried on the mission of their spiritual guide in far off region of Africa where they brought innumerable people within the fold of Islam.[45]

Shaikh 'Abdul Qādir Jīlāni also rendered invaluable service in popularising religious education, giving currency to the *sunnah* of the Prophet and weaning the people away from irreligious inovations and deviations from the true faith and its practice.[46]

Reformers of Indo-Pak Sub-Continent

Innumerable spiritual guides and reformers of Indo-Pak sub-continent belonged to the lineage of Hasan and Husain. They re-established the bonds of relationship between the created beings and their Creator, purified the self and guided the people in the methods of saving themselves from moral corruption and deception of the devil. They have a distinguished record of renewal of faith and spirituality among the people. The limited space available here would not allow us to give even a brief

account of all of them but we shall refer here to some of the most eminent among them like Khwājā Nizām-ud-dīn Muhammad b. Ahmad of Badaun (popularly known as Sultān-ul-Mashāikh and Mahboob-i-Ilāhi) and his spiritual successors Syed Nasır-ud-dīn Mahmūd b. Yahya of Oudh (also known as Chirāgh-i-Dehli) and Syed Muhammad b. Yūsuf Husaini of Gulbarga (given the title of Khwājā Gesū Darāz).[47] They all belonged to the progeny of the Prophet.

Khwājā Nizām-ud-dīn Auliya's (636-715/1239-1315) achievement described by 'Ali b. Sultān al-Qāri in his *Al-Athmār al-Janniyata fi Asm'ā al-Hanafīyah* reads:

> "His attainment in calling the people back to God and infusing the enthusiasm for submission to divine commandments, leading a virtuous life, creating an aversion for worldliness and longing for purification of the self was unparalleled. He also combined the depth of knowledge with modesty found in the elects of God."

Another scholar Mujd-ud-dīn Firozābādi has spoken highly of Shaikh Nizām-ud-dīn in the *Altāf al-Khafīyata fi Ashrāf al-Hanafīyah*.[48]

The wholesome influence exterted by these masters of spirit was not confined to their hospices alone, but had a salutary effect on life of the masses

The noted historian of the age, Ziā-ūd-dīn Barni writes about the reform in social life of the people brought about by Khwāja Nizām-ūd-dīn Auliya.

> "The dominant masters of the path of spirit during the reign of Sultān 'Ala'-ud-dīn were Shaikh-ul-Islam Nizām-ud-dīn, Shaikh-ul-Islam 'Alā'-ūd-dīn and Shaikh-ul-Islam Rukn-ūd-dīn. A world was illuminated by the radiance of their piety, thousands had taken oath of allegiance to them and repented of their sins, and innumerable frowards had left their evil ways and become dutiful observers of prayers for ever. Many of them betook the path of spirit, became righteous and punctilious worshippers. Love for the world took flight in

those who witnessed the moral virtues and frugal life of these masters. The wayfarers of the path of spirit became more enthusiastic in their orisons and litanies and started endeavouring for attaining miraculous powers through inculcating divine propinquity. The religiosity and virtue of these spiritual guides had made the people truthful and straightforward, and their moral behaviour and devotional travails had created a longing in the people for leading a life of virtue and goodness.

"Sultān 'Alā'-ud-dīn Khilji alongwith his family members had become a sincere follower of the Shaikh. The nobles and the commoners had betaken the right path. During the last few years of 'Alā'-ud-dīn's rule the people had completely given up wine, lustfulness, gambling and immorality. Major sins were equated with infidelity. Charging of interest and hoarding were deemed so shameful that no Muslim dared commit these sins. No shopkeeper spoke lies, nor shortweighed, nor yet adulterated the goods sold by him."[49]

Shaikh Mahmūd b. Yahya of Oudh (who held the title of Shaikh Nasīr-ud-dīn Chirāgh-i-Dehli) was on an elevated plane of spiritual perfection : scrupulously following the *sunnah*, inviting people to God and endeavouring to serve the people, he led an ascetic life and died at Delhi in 757/1358, where he was buried.[50]

These spiritual guides were not heedless of their responsibility at the hour of difficulty and need, and helped the society and government with their advice and guidance whenever such an occasion arose. An occasion of this nature was the death of Sultan Muhammad Tughluq at Thatha in Sind where the Muslim government and its army became leaderless, while Mongol hordes bent upon attacking India faced it across the river. It was then on the insistence of Nasīr-ud-din Chirāgh-i-Dehli that Firoz Tughluq accepted to take the reins of government in his hand. During the 40 years of Firoz Tughluq's rule India

witnessed exemplary peace, crimes became fewer and a trend of moral uplift set in among the people. All this was achieved by the radiance of Chirāgh-i-Dehli.[51]

Another purer soul descending from the Prophet was Syed Muhammad b. Yūsuf of Gulbarga (popularly known as Khwājā Gesū Darāz). Besides being an erudite scholar he was also a perfect guide of the spiritual path credited with innumerable miraculous events. He was a progeny of Yahyā b. Husain b. Zayd the martyr. Born in 731/1331 he died in the year 825/1422. Reputed religious scholars used to refer to him difficult religious and legal problems while his guidance was sought for purification of the morals and spirit and betaking the path of righteousness. He was thus an adept both in learning and the path of mysticism.[52]

Syed Ashraf Jahāngīr b. Ibrāhīm was yet another angelic soul. An Alid of both Hasani and Husaini lineage, he was born at Samnān and brought up as the crown prince. He acquired education from the eminent scholars of his time and ascended the throne after the death of his father, but he continued his quest of knowledge under 'Ala-ud-dīn Samnāni and other scholars and spiritual guides. After wielding power for a time, he resigned in favour of his brother Muhammad and set out for India. He settled down at Kachawcha[53] where he guided the people in purification of self and perfection of spirit and invited the people to the message of God. Thousands of persons entered the fold of Islam through his efforts.

Syed Ashraf Jahāngīr Samnāni was also a reputed scholar and traveller. He has many works on law, jurisprudence, theological scholastics and mysticism to his credit. He was well-versed in genealogy, biography and exegesis and has left a collection of his poetics. Syed Ashraf died on 28th Muharram, 808/26th July, 1405.

Although he spent his time in mystic exercises and spiritual guidance of the people, he was not inattentive of the political developments and the future of nascent Muslim society and state in the country.

When Raja Kans made preparations to capture Bengal, jeopardizing the freedom of a weak Muslim kingdom of the region, Syed Ashraf Jahāngir Samnāni invited the attention of Sultān Ibrāhīm Sharqi and urged him to remove that danger. Thus the region continued under Muslim authority enabling the Muslims to preserve their religious identity and culture.[54]

A gifted mystic among these great spiritual guides was Syed Ādam Binnauri, a descendant of Husain through Mūsa al-Kāzim. Innumerable people were benefited through his guidance. It is reported that four hundred thousand Muslims took the oath on his hand to tread the path of *sunnah* and a hundred thousand attained spiritual perfection. His hospice was always crowded by at least a thousand persons every day, all of whom were provided food as well as spiritual guidance by him. In 1052/1642 he went to Lahore with ten thousand followers. Shāhjahān who happened to be present at the time at Lahore, felt alarmed by the popularity of the Shaikh, and suggested him to go for Haj. The Shaikh went away to Hijāz where after performing the pilgrimage, he settled down in Medina and died there in 1053/1643.[55]

The uninterrupted literary and religious pursuit of the progeny of the Prophet would require an encyclopaedic volume to record it in all its details. Therefore, skipping over the time and space we now come to the great reformer and spiritual guide of his time Saiyid Ahmad b. 'Irfan the martyr[56] (1201-1246/1748-1831) who is regarded by many a scholar as the renovator of faith in the thirteenth century of Islamic era. The efforts made by him to breathe a new life into the people awakened them to abide by the demands of their faith; the true content of *tauhīd* came to be understood and acted upon; the path of *sunnah* was betaken again in India : and the fervour of Jihād, the enthusiasm to lay down ones life for the sake of God, was generated so extensively that it became reminiscent of the earliest era of Islam. The courage and eagerness to enforce the *sharī'ah* in the individual and collective life of the Muslims was rekindled under his guidance and a forceful and wide-based movement for

the establishment of an independent Islamic State on the pattern of the right-guided caliphate came into existence. This movement took the shape of an organised effort to liberate the country, which had for several centuries been under the authority of Muslim rulers, from the yoke of Englishmen[57] who were slowly strengthening their grip over it and threatening the freedom of all the Muslim countries. His followers made heroic efforts and made exceptional sacrifices to achieve this end. The British administrators and historians of the time had also realised the danger posed by the Saiyid's movement to their rule in India.[58] It was, in short, a revivalist movement of its own kind incomparable in the recent past in any part of the Islamic world.[59]

"A sign of God he was," says Nawāb Siddīq Hasan Khān of Bhopal (d. 1307/1890), a noted Arabist and scholar, "in guiding the people on the right path and making their hearts incline towards God. A very large number of these became pure-hearted saints through the potent influence exerted by him, while his spiritual successors sweeped the country clean of all innovations and polytheistic thoughts and practices. They led the people on the path of the Book and the *sunnah* and one can still see the change brought about by the sermons of these saintly souls......In short, there was none so godly and perfect of spirit in the whole world in those days, nor was there any mystic or religious scholar who exerted such a salutary influence even over one-tenth of the people as he did."[60]

'Abdul Ahad, an eminent scholar, had met several disciples of the Saiyid. He says: "About forty thousand non-Muslims embraced Islam on the hands of the Saiyid and three million Muslims took oath of fealty to him. If all the people entering his spiritual fold through the efforts of his spiritual successors were also taken into account, the number of such persons would run into crores."[61]

Freedom Fighters in the Arab World

Several reformers, spiritual guides and freedom fighters of the Arab world came from the ranks of the Prophet's progeny

who fought the powerful and well-organised forces of European colonial powers with courage and determination. Many of these countries regained their freedom through their efforts.

We shall mention here only two of these valiant fighters. These accounts have been taken from the *Hāzir al-Islāmi* of Amīr Shakīb Arsalān. He writes about Amīr ‘Abdul Qādir al-Jazā'iri :

> "Amīr ‘Abdul Qādir's full name is ‘Abdul Qādir b. Muhī-ud-din Hasani. His forefathers were Saiyids belonging to North Africa. Born in 1223/1808, he was brought up in a religious family engaged in pursuit of learning. He devoted himself to acquisition of knowledge and became well-versed in literature, law, theological scholasticism and philosophy. At the same time he continued to take training in martial arts including horse-riding. Along with his scholarly attainments he became a skilled marksman and cavalier. He became equally proficient both in pen and the sword which earned popular regard for him. After the death of his father, he consolidated his authority over the mid-region of North Africa and was recognised as the ruler of these areas. A number of adjacent provinces acceded to the state headed by him. On the day of Yaum al-Maqt‘a (26th June, 1835) he inflicted defeat to the French army but subsequently he had to suffer a defeat against the French General Bugeaud. However, he held on his entrenchment. In the treaty of Tafna, the French had to acknowledge his valour. The entire province of Dahrān and a greater part of Algeria remained a part of his dominion in accordance with this treaty.
>
> "Although the situation was grim, he was never unheedful of establishing an Islamic State. He declared *jihād* against the French in January, 1839 and continuously fought them till 1843. He fought, throughout this period, with such courage and determination that he

became a legendary figure all over the world, but the military strength of the contenders being extremely disproportionate, the enemy occupied most of the cities held by 'Abdul Qādir. At last the Algerian supporters of 'Abdul Qādir also deserted him and the French consolidated their authority. Amīr 'Abdul Qādir took shelter in Morocco. He again mounted an attack on the French possessions in Algeria and his forces penetrated upto the settlements of the Berber tribes. He could not gain any advantage out of it as the French had already consolidated their power. At last, he migrated to Syria and spent the rest of his life in Damascus where he kept the company of the scholars and helped those whom he found in need. He was a model of benignity and God-consciousness. He died in 1883 and was buried at Al-Sālehyah in Damascus".[62]

Amīr Shakīb Arsalān has given the following account of Saiyidi Ahmad As-Sharīf al-Sinnausi who was a descendant of Hasan b. 'Ali.

"In Saiyidi Ahmad al-Sharīf al-Sinnausi I have seen a man who was an erudite scholar with breadth of vision and a great teacher and guide with a dignified bearing. I have not seen in my life a man more noble and exalted in demeanour. With his kingly bearing he combined agility and watchfulness, sweet temperament, magnanimity, wisdom and insight and practical intelligence. His memory was strong and his personality was imposing. Although he was very soft-spoken, everyone found it difficult to speak before him out of respect for him.

"I have witnessed such a remarkable power of endurance in him that would be seldom found in anyone among his contemporaries. He had an exceptionally strong will-power and his face had a radiant look. If he was an 'elect' by virtue of his spirituality and God-consciousness, he was heroic by reason of his courage and

valour. During the battles of Tripoli (as I have heard) he used himself to lead his troops, riding his horse for as many as ten hours at an strech without feeling the least tiredness. He used to defy every danger and advance deep into the enemy ranks where the military commanders were forbidden to go lest they fell into the hands of the enemy in the case of defeat."[63]

Notes and References :

1. Abu Nu'aym Isbahāni, *Hilyatul Auliya Tabaqāt al-Asfiyā, op. cit.*, Vol. II, Part III, p. 41.
2. *Ibid*, p. 135.
3. *Ibid*, p. 136
4. *Ibid*, p. 136
5. *Ibid*, p. 136
6. *Ibid*, p. 56
7. *Ibid*, p. 56
8. *Ibid*, p. 56
9. Commonly known as Shāh Bāno.
10. *Hilyatul Auliya, op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 193.
11. *Ibid*, p. 193
12. Abu Zuhra, *Al-Imām al-Sādiq*, Beirut, p. 77
13. Mūsa b. J'afar b. Muhammad b. 'Ali.
14. Ibn Jauzi, 'Iz-ud-dīn, *Sifat-us-Safwah*, Hyderabad, 1355 A.H., Vol. II. p. 103.
15. Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh Damishq al-Kabīr*, Beirut, 1979, Vol. IV, pp. 165-69.
16. *Al-Mahez* meaning authentic and perfect was added to his name since his father was the son of Hasan and his mother a daughter of Husain. Thus, he was a perfect Alid or descendant of 'Ali.
17. *Tārikh Damishq al-Kabir, op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 357-66.
18. *Al-Bidāyah, op. cit.*, Vol. IX, p. 42
19. *Ibid*, Vol. X, p. 95
20. *Al-Kāmil, op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 553
21. *Ibid*, Vol. V, pp. 547-48

2 2. *Al-Bidāyah, op. cit* , Vol. IX. p. 106
23. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafyāt al-Ā'yān,* Cairo, 1948, Vol II p. 434.
24. *Ibid*, II, p. 434.
25. *Hilyatul Auliya, op. cit.* Vol. II, Part III, p. 136.
26. *Ibid*, II, p. 137
27. *Ibid*, II, p. 138
28. *Tcrīkh Damishq, op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 165-69.
29. *Al-Bidāyah, op., cit.*, Vol IX, p. 171.
30. Abi al-Farj Isbahāni, *Maqātil al-Tālibin.*, Beirut, p. 126.
1. Q. 59: 10.
32. *Sifat al-Safwah, op. cit* , Vol. II, p. 55.
33. *Ibid*, II, p. 185.
34, *Ibid*, II, p. 185. Another version of the report says: 'Who make fun of them.'
35. *Ibid*, II, p. 185.
36. *Tārīkh Damishq, op. cit.*, pp. 357-58.
37. A few works that can be mentioned here by way of illustration are the author's *Seerat Syed Ahmad Shahīd* in Urdu covering 1176 pages. Another work entitled *Syed Ahmad Shahīd* by Gulām Rasul Mehr is in four volumes. The writer of these lines has also written *Iza Habbat Raih al Imān* in Arabic and *Jab Imān Ki Bahār Āyi* in Urdu. Mohiudin Ahmad's *Saiyid Ahmad Shahīd—His Life and Mission* is also a definitive work on the subject in English. Amīr Shakīb Arsalān has collected valuable information about the Sinnausi Movement in Barqa and the *Jihād* of 'Abdul Qādir in Algeria in Vol. II of the *Hāzir al-'Alam al-Islāmi.*
38. The Brothers of purity (*Ikhwān-us-Safa*) was a society of free thinkers unduely impressed by the Greek Philosophy with clandestine ends. For details see *Tārikh Falsāfah al Islām fi al-Mashriq wal Maghrib*, Cairo, 1349/1927, by Muhammad Lutfi Jum'ah.
39. Historians are on record that Idrīs b. 'Abdullah (b. Abdullah b. Hasan) who was also known as Idrī, Akbar (d. 175/791) was the fonder of Muslim rule in North Africa. It was also because of his conciliatory attitude that the Berbers embraced Islam in large numbers.
40. As stated in Hakīm Syed 'Abdul Hai's *Nuzhat al-Khawātir*, 'Ali b. Shihāb Ismā'il, b. 'Ali, b. Muhammad b 'Ali b. Husain came to Kashmir in 773/1371 or 780/1378. A majority of its people accepted Islam due to his endeavours. (Vol. II, p. 85). Islamic culture and learning owe their origin to him. Later on Kashmir gave birth to several erudite scholars.

41. The northern part of Borneo Island
42. *Al-Mudkhil Ila Tārīkh al-Islam fi as Sharq al Aqsa* by Syed 'Alavi b. Tāhir al-Āndda (Jedda, 1405) gives the details of these endeavours.
43. He was a descendant of 'Ali with ten intervening links.
44. 'Umar al-Kaysāni, *Qalā'id al-Jawāhar*, Egypt, 1303 A. H., p. 22.
45. T. W. Arnold's *Preaching of Islam* and *Hāzir al 'Ālam al-Islami*, Vol. II by Amīr Shaāib Arsalān, give detailed accounts of the efforts of these preachers of Islam.
46. Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali says that Shaikh 'Abdul Qādir was a Hanbalite following the earlier scholars of *hadith*. In theological matters like the attributes of God and reality of destiny he accepted the Prophet's exposition of these issues rejecting all subsequent interpretations.
47. A detailed account of the life and achievements of these paragons of spirituality can be seen in Hakīm Syed 'Abdul Hai's *Nuzhatul al-Khawātir*, Vol. II and III.
48. *Nuzhatul Khawātir, op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 155-56.
49. Zia-ud-din Barni, *Tārīkh Firoz Shāhi*, Calcutta, 1862, p. 341.
50. *Nuzhatul Khawātir, op. cit.*, Vol. II pp. 155-56.
51. Zia-ud-dīn Barni, *Tārīkh Firoz Shāhi, op. cit.*, Urdu translation by the same name by Syed Moinul Haq, Lahore, 1983, pp. 753-56.
52. *Nuzhatul Khawātir, op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 146-160.
53. A town in Faizabad district of Uttar Pradesh.
54. *Makātīb Syed Ashraf Jahāngīr*, letter No. 46 pp. 96-97, Maulana Azad Library MSS, M. U. Aligarh: Prof. Khalīq Ahmad Nizāmi, *Tārikh Masha'ikh-i-Chisht*, p. 756.
55. *Nuzhatul Khawātir, op cit.*, Vol. V, p. 201.
56. He was a descendant of Muhammad Dhu an-Nafs as-Zakīyah (b. 'Abdullāh al-Mahez b. Hasan al-Muthanna b. Hasan b. 'Ali). His forefather Shaikh-ul-Islam Syed Qutb-ud-dīn Muhammad came to India in the seventh century, captured many cities and forts, and settled down in Kara Manikpūr. A number of scholars, reformers and spiritual guides were born in his lineage among whom Saiyid Ahmad Shahīd was the most distinguished.
57. The letters written by Saiyid Ahmad to the some of the rulers of Indian States and others clearly speak of the danger from the foreigners and the need to liberate the country from them. See Mohi-ud-din Ahmad, *Saiyid Ahmad Shahīd—His Life and Mission*, Lucknow, 1975, pp 125-26.
58. W. W. Hunter, *The Indian Musalmans*, London, 1876, p. 80; Syed Mohiuddin Ahmad, *Saiyid Ahmad Shahīd, op. cit.*, pp. 375-394; Qiyam-ud-din Ahmad, *The Wahabi Movement in India*, Calcutta, 1966, pp. 86-87, 335.

59. See *A Misunderstood Reformer* by the author as well as *Izā Habbat Raih al-Imān* in Arabic and *Jab Imān Ki Bahār Āy.* in Urdu by him.
60. Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan, *Tiqsār-o-Juyūd al-Ahrār*, Bhopal, 1298 A. H., pp. 10-110.
61. Muhammad J'afar Thānesri, *Sawāneh Ahmadī*, Delhi, 1309 A.H., p. 95.
62. Amīr Shakīb Arsalān, *Hāzir al-'Ālam al-Islami*, Egypt, 1352 A.H., Vol. II, pp. 168-173.
63. *Ibid*, p. 159-60.

XII

THE SHI'ITE DOCTRINE OF IMAMATE

The discussion in the foregoing pages has made it abundantly clear that the members of the Prophet's household subscribed to the accepted faith of Islam which they had received from the Prophet. It consisted of *tauhīd*, the oneness of God and finality of prophethood. It was the faith held by the great majority of Muslims, the *ahl-i-sunnat*, that the revelation from God had ceased, the faith of Islam had taken its final shape and the grace and blessings of God in this world as well as deliverance in the hereafter rested on placing trust in these doctrines. They knew that the God has said :

> "Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved ISLAM for your religion.[1]

Now there remained no possibility of any new prophet being sent by God nor was any new methodology to be adopted for law-making under the *shari·ah*. No addition or substraction was to be made now in the basic doctrines of Islam. 'Ali b. Abi Tālib and his descendants firmly held, as their biographical accounts and related literature show, these very articles of faith.

Sufyān relates from Mutrif, and Mutrif from Sh'aby, on the authority of Abu Hujayfah : "I asked 'Ali whether he had received anything directly from the Prophet in addition to the Qur'ān

(which was not known to others).[2] He replied, 'I swear by Him who cleaves the seed and gives birth to every sentient being that I have nothing save the intelligence which is bestowed by God to a few for the comprehension of the Qur'ān, and that which I have in writing."[3] On being asked further what he had in writing 'Ali said, "Fine for manslaughter of a Muslim, release of prisoners and that a Muslim is not to be slain for a disbeliever."[4]

Psychological Backdrop of Imamate

The members of the Prophet's household had given faith to the creed held collectively by all the Muslims, they considered themselves bound to follow the Qur'ān and the *sunnah* like any other Muslim. They knew that only one's actions and morals and learning and awe of God entitled anyone to be respected by others They were convinced of the correctness of the Quranic dictum: *Lo ! the nob'est of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct.*[5] Subsequently, however, the bygone tradition of holy order propagated by ancient religions and nurtured by the antiquated thought and culture of Greece, Iran, India and China, reasserted itself among a section of the new converts to Islam. The ancient thought, almost universally accepted, had been that the families which had somehow come to assume a sacred character through their religious functions or travails or by attaining higher spirituality, were incarnations of supernatural power and agents of gods [6] They had a special position, above the law, and enjoyed powers to make and unmake the law.

There are certain predilections and subjective factors that make this doctrine acceptable to the people.

1. It serves as a protection against personal responsiblity and accountability since the precept shifts the liability to the particular family, class of persons or an individual representing that family and class, and it is just enough to have confidence in them.

2. It is easier to submit to any particular family or individuals by placing confidence in or showing reverence and

obedience to them than to abide by a complete code of canons prescribing injunctions for all matters which are further elucidated by juristic opinions of the scholars.

3. To exploit any particular family or an individual or even a group of persons for one's profit is comparatively easier and the smoothest way to achieve power and prestige. This method can be helpful to any crafty person in realising his selfish ends through a little effort by gaining confidence of a person or family deemed as infallible by the people, while fame and honour and popularity among the masses demand hard and continuous labour. Many a machiavellian person had utilized this method to his personal advantage.

The Athna 'Ashari sect has found this creed (of racial and hereditary sanctity) helpful in securing its political and personal ends and that is why it was cloaked with sacredness as an article of faith.

This sect allowed itself to believe that the successors of the Prophet and the Imāms are appointed by God who are impeccable like the messengers of God. They hold that it is incumbent on every Muslim to obey them since they enjoy parity with the Prophet of Islam and are higher in rank than other apostles of God. The obligation man owes to God cannot be fulfilled in the absence of an Imām nor the obedience to God is complete without knowing the Imām. The world would not last without a Imām and to know him is an essential postulate of the faith. The obedience to the Imāms is similar to that of the prophets and they have the authority to declare anything lawful as unlawful or vice versa. As the Imāms are innocent and sinless like the prophets of God, one who gives faith to their impeccability becomes entitled to paradise even if he were a tyrant or wicked. The Imāms are on a par with the blessed Prophet but higher than all other created beings. The deeds of all are brought to the notice of the Imāms twice, in the day and the night, and the angels call upon them at all times. They experience Ascension every Friday night; on occasion of *Lailatul Qadr* (the Night of Power) every year they receive a new scripture from God; they

have authority over life and death and govern this world and the next with full powers to award whatever they like to anyone.[7]

The following report finds a place in the *Usūl al-Kāfi* :

> "Hasan b. 'Abbās al-M'arūfi wrote to Imām 'Ali Raza : 'May I be a ransom for you. Kindly tell me the difference between an apostle and a prophet and an Imām.' He wrote in reply : 'The difference between an apostle and a prophet and an Imām is that Gabriel comes to an apostle who sees and hears the angel, receives revelations of God through him and often sees him in a dream as did Abraham. A prophet sometimes hears Gabriel and often sees him too. An Imām hears the angel but does not see him."[8]

The noted historian Ibn Khaldūn has given an objective description of the Shi'ite doctrine of Imamate. He says :

> "For the Shi'ites the Imamate is not one of the social requirements left to the discretion and wisdom of the community nor the person vested with that authority is elected by the Muslims. Imamate is rather an essential article of faith, a fundamental creed of Islam to them. No prophet can ignore it, nor entrust the responsibility of his election to his followers. It is the duty of the prophet to appoint an Imām for the community of believers and such an Imām is unblemished, clear of all sins, major and minor. 'Ali was the person whom the Prophet of Islam had (in the light of reports narrated and the creed held by them) appointed to that office."[9]

Ibn Khaldūn further says :

> "There are over-credulous sects among them which exceed the limits of faith and reason by assigning divinity to the Imāms. They maintain that the Imāms were human beings but they possessed divine attributes or God had entered into their human frame. Infusion of divine spirit or 'the Word made flesh' is in fact a Christian creed in regard to Jesus Christ. Those subscribing to

this creed about 'Ali were got burnt by him When Muhammad b. al-Hanafīyah was informed that Mukhtār b. 'Ubayd had faith in this creed, he imprecated upon him and declared that he had nothing to do with such a belief. The behaviour of J'afar Sādiq with such credulous persons was also the same.

"These sects also include those who believe that the sublimity possessed by the Imāms cannot be attained by any body else and hence when an Imām dies, that sublimity is transferred to the succeeding Imām. This creed is known as incarnation or transmigration.'[10]

The concept of Imamate has been maintained by the Athna 'Ashari sect down the ages without any change or modification becau^e it constitutes one of its fundamental articles of belief. This is the creed still held by it including Imām Khomaini who writes in the *Al-Hukūmat-al-Islāmiyah*:

"The Imām occupies the glorious station, the supreme place, and wields such a delegated authority of genesis that everything in this universe submits to his surpassing glory. In accordance with the accepted tenets of our religion neither any angel of the highest rank nor anyone such as a prophet can attain the sublime position of an Imām. As related in our *ahādith* the Great Prophet and the Imāms existed before the creation of this cosmic order in the form of light, encircling the Throne of God and enjoying such propinquity to Him as known only to God."[11]

The unhealthy influence exerted by such an exaggerated concept of Imamate has been noticed even by the non-Muslim scholars. Patric Huges writes in the *Dictionary of Islam*:

"Many of the Shi'ahs have carried their veneration for 'Ali as far as to raise him to the position of a divine person, and most of the sects make their Imāms partakers of divine nature."[12]

Another western scholar, W. Ivanow, says in the *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*:

"With the light of *Imamat* continually flowing into the world, the institute of prophetship, or apostleship, occupied only an anxiliary position.........[13]

Iranian Influence

In fact, a delicate doctrine like the Imamate, which goes beyond racial and lineal chauvinism to raise the status of Imāms to the position of divinity, reflects the ancient creed of Iran in the divine origin of kings. In the ancient Iran religious and temporal authority was concentrated in the hands of a tribe known as Media. After Zoroastrianism consolidated its hold on the country, religious leadership came to be held by the al-Moghān tribe. The caste ridden Iran had a priestly class which was believed to be the shadow of God on earth; all men were created to serve that class and the class itself was for the service of God. It was, therefore, essential that ruler of the country should belong to the priestly tribe. In the estimation of the Iranians the ruler was an incarnation of God and it was his prerogative to officiate as the chief priest at the fire-alter.[14]

Dr. Ahmad Amin, an eminent Egyptian scholar quotes Dozy in the *Fajr al-Islām*.

"Iranians equated their monarch with God and paid a similar regard to the royal family. They held that the obedience of the Imām (the ruler) was not only obligatory but submission to him also meant obedience to God."[15]

Such an absolute reliance on any particular family or class of persons and acceptance of its monopoly of religious and temporal leadership had led the followers of certain ancient religions to bend their knees before human beings instead of God and numbed their freedom of thought and intellectual capacities by festering their minds and setting in stagnation among them.

Oftentimes people have been mercilessly exploited socially and economically because of this way of thought. In the medieval ages letters of atonement and redemption and keys to

the heaven were sold by the Popes.[16] The blind faith in the church led to a bloody struggle between science and the priesthood[17] which ultimately led to the separation of state and religion and then to the rejection of everything connected with faith Secularisation of the state accepted by Muslim countries has unnecessarily and without any justification pushed them to a constant internal conflict between their ruling class and the masses who desire Islamic laws to be enforced as the law of the land in these countries. They are now wasting their energy and resources in their internal strife instead of conserving them to fight their enemies.

Imamate is a concept parallel to prophethood but the worst part of it is that it confers dictatorial powers on those who wield authority and makes them competent to legislate new laws or abrogate divine laws. Slavish submission to such rulers, if they also happen to be religious leaders, has empowered these rulers with the authority to invalidate even the obligatory practices of Islam for political reasons They exercise this authority by virtue of their claim to be appointed by God and representing the sinless Imāms. A recent example of it is furnished by the message of Imām Khomeni to Syed 'Ali Khāmnai published in the *Kayhān*, the organ of Iranian government in its issue no. 182 dated 23rd Jamadi al-Ula, 1408 A.H. The message said :

> "Government can suspend or order demolition of any mosque : the government takes precedence over prayers and fasting. The government is directly derived from the prophethood and constitutes its initial and fundamental commandment. It, therefore, has priority over secondary directives including those relating to prayer, fasting and pilgrimage. The ruler has the authority to suspend any mosque, and if need arises, to order demolition of any mosque. It can scrap even Islamic precepts, whether they pertain to devotional exercises or any other matter, if they appear to be injuring the interest of Islam. If the government deems it to be in the interest of the Islamic State, it can suspend pilgrimage

> although it is one of the important obligatory devotional exercises of Islam. It is because the government in itself represents the autonomous vicegerency of God."[18]

Now it is manifestly clear that the suspension or abrogation of obligatory religious practices or making changes in the religious injunctions having the sanction of the Qur'ān and the *hadīth* by any individual, whether because of his juristic opinion or in view of political expediency, is extremely dangerous for an eternal religion. It can result in apostasy of an Islamic country or nation. Such a blind obedience to the government can render religion ineffective and pave the way to a situation which cannot be overcome later on. The fruitless conflict between Iran and Iraq which lingered on for several years and inflicted great harm to both the countries illustrates the dangers inherent in this concept. This internecine war came to an end in August 1988 with great difficulty, owing to the huge losses and destruction and internal unrest in one country, and the intervention of the super powers in the other.

The Imamate wielding absolute power and demanding unquestioning obedience becomes a dictatorship which can be a menace to world peace; it can endanger peace, law and order, agriculture and trade, in short, the very existence of human race. Dictatorships have posed similar threats to humanity in earlier times too. But, when such an absolute and tyrannical authority assumes sanctity under religion, claims to be faultless and deems itself as commissioned by God by representing prophethood, its perilous threat increases manifold. It can be suicidical for a country or nation or the sect giving faith to it and there would be no escape for it from this danger.

This concept of exaltation and veneration of any group or class of persons gives rise to parasites who are indolent and indiscreet. They squander national wealth on their own pleasure and amusement, increase unemployment among the people, open the door to the tyrannical feudal system of the medieval ages, and sow the seeds of stagnation in the intellectual and religious

spheres. The chosen few exploit the working classes, fundamental rights of the citizens are trampled down and a class of work-shy and lazy people comes forth which profits by the labour of others. Verily, God has said in truth :

> O believers, many of the rabbis and monks indeed consume the goods of the people in vanity and bar from God's way.[19]

The blind and zealous obedience of Imām Khomeini by his followers investing him with a sacrosanct authority so long as he lived, amply demonstrates that this concept violates the *sharī'ah* and is against the notion of *tauhīd*, thus explained by the Qur'ān.

> It belongs not to any mortal that God should give him the Book, the Judgement, the Prophethood, then he should say to men, 'Be you servants to me apart from God.' Rather, 'Be you masters in that you know the Book, and in that you study.' He would never order you to take the angels and the prophets as Lords. What, would He order you to disbelieve, after you have surrendered (to Allah) ![20]

International news agencies reported that when Ayatullah Khomeini died on 3rd June, 1989 at Tahran, the Iranian government made arrangements to convey his corpse to the Jannat-i-Zuhra cemetery on a vehicle but the people burst in on the corpse in such large numbers that it became impossible to carry it on the vehicle. A helicopter was engaged to carry the corpse to the cemetery but there, too, the frenzied crowd of millions crashed in to take away the shreds of his coffin as a relic leaving the corpse naked. Repeated announcements, warnings and even shots fired in the air had absolutely no effect on the mob, the naked corpse fell down on the ground and ultimately the government had to postpone the burial which took place after several hours.

News reports also say that the Iranian government intends to build a magnificent mausoleum for him which will be finest in the world. It would be designed on the pattern of K'aba and

the tomb of Imām 'Ali Raza. Obviously, billions would be spent on it to make it another Taj Mahal of Agra.

All this is nothing but a manifestationof the creed of Imamate endued with divinity: vesting mortals with impeccability and sanctity undeserved by human beings. It is elevation of man to the status of supernatural being which had been done away with by the teachings of the Prophet.

The most reliable and authentic reports about the character and behaviour of the Prophet tell us that he never liked any distinctive treatment for him nor approved of any exaltation as the followers of other religions usually did about their prophets. He bade his followers simply to treat him as an Apostle and servant of God Anas is reported as saying that :

> "Nobody was dearer to us than the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, but we never stood up (as a mark of respect) for him because we knew that he disliked it."[21]

> "When someone addressed the Prophet as 'O best of the creation', he replied, 'This is the status enjoyed by Abraham, peace be upon him."[22]

'Umar b. al-Khattāb relates that the Prophet said :

> Do not extol me like the Christians who glorify 'Isā ibn Maryam. I am a servant of God. If you have to say anything about me say only that I am a servant and apostle of God."[23]

The Prophet of Islam tried his best that his followers should not commit the mistake of magnifying and paying tribute to him bordering to divinity like the followers of other prophets, who sometimes exalted even the learned and the elect amongst them in a similar manner. Just before the Prophet yielded his breath, he said: 'May God ruin the Jews and Christians for they have turned the sepulchers of their Prophets into places of worship.'[24]

'Āisha and Ibn 'Abbās relate that when the time for the Apostle's eternal rest drew nigh, he pulled a sheet over his face and then feeling restless removed it. It was in this condition that he had uttered these words. He meant to warn Muslims

against that practice.

The Prophet always forbade lamentation and beating of breast over anybody's death. The purpose was to create an abiding faith in the Almighty which was to be evinced through all utterances and deeds of the Muslims, His guidance and training was fully demonstrated by the action of his followers when he died. His companions loved and revered him as nobody has ever been loved—more than their own selves, their belongings and children—but nobody shed a tear nor gave expression to his sorrow in the manner forbidden by the Prophet. Not even 'Ali, Hasan and Husain, who were nearest to him, showed up their agonising distress It was because all of them had an unflinching faith in *tauhīd*, the oneness of God.

Contrarily, the lamentation of the Iranians brought up with the belief in impeccability and consecration of Imamate, which reflects their ancient Zoroastrian creed, found expression in their mourning for a man as if he were a hallowed and angelic being.

Notes and References :

1. Q. 5 : 3.
2. The question was asked since certain persons held the view that 'Ali had been told certian things secretly by the Prophet which were not known to others.
3. That is, what fine is to be levied for manslaughter of a Muslim and how it is to be distributed among the heirs of such a person.
4. *Musnad al-Imām Ahmad b. Hanbal* (*Musnad 'Ali b. 'Abi Tālib*).
5. Q. 49 : 13
6. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1985), Vol. 26, pp. 1041-45.
7. Summarised from *Usūl 'an al-Jawāmi'e al-Kāfi* by Al-Kulaini, Muhammad b. Yaqūb al-Razi, Iran, 1281 A. H., pp. 103-959 and *Sharh Usūl al-Kāfi*, Vol. II, p. 229.
8. *Usūl al-Kāfi*, p. 82
9. Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddamah Ibn Khaldūn*, (ed). 'Abdul Wāhid Wāfi, Egypt, p. 138.
10. *Ibid*, p. 590.
11. 'Allama Khomeini, *Al-Hukūmat-al-Islamiyah*, Kutubkhana Buzurg Islāmi, Tehran, p. 52

12. Patrick Huges, *Dictionary of Islam*, London, 1885, p. 475.
13. Gibbs, H. A. R., and, Kramers J.H. *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Leiden, 1953, p. 166
14. See *Tārikh al-Diyānata al-Zurdushtiya* and other historical literature on Iran.
15. Dr. Ahmad Amin, *Fajr al-Islām*, Egypt. p. 277
16. It is reported that Imam Khomeini also gave similar guarantees to those enlisting for active service during the Iran-Iraq war.
17. See Draper's *Conflict Between Religion and Science* for details.
18. The Daily *Kayhān*, Issue no. 182, dated 23rd Jumadi al-Ula, 1408 A.H.
19. Q. 9 : 34
20. Q. 3 : 79-80.
21. *Tirmidhi*; *Musnad Ahmad*.
22. *Sahīh Muslim*.
23. *Sahīh Bukhāri*.
24. *Ibid*.

XIII

THE FIRST FOUR CALIPHS

An appraisal of the right-guided caliphate comprising the rule of first four Caliphs as a fortuitous combination of persons, brought together by the Providence, although they differed in their deportment, objectives and working or that they pursued different policies and programmes with their varied outlooks and inclinations and had nothing in common except their unflinching faith and sincerity, truthfulness and piety is, to the writer of these lines, not at all justified. Those who are discerning and analytical divide this period of caliphate into two stages. The first part is viewed by them as the span of Islamic expansion and onward march and the second as that of its stagnation and recession. They identify the first period with the rule of Abu Bakr and 'Umar and the later spell with the regimes of 'Uthmān and 'Ali. To me such a division is presumptuous. In my view all the four Caliphs characteristically reflected the vicegerency of prophethood. Apart from their personal merits and distinctions, each of them displayed the aura of right-guided caliphate to the point of perfection. This raises the question : What right-guided caliphate really means ? Right-guided caliphate is neither expansion of the Islamic realm nor brilliant conquests nor yet incessant success against heavy odds. If this were the criterion, we would have to acknowledge Walīd b. 'Abdul Malik and Harūn al-Rashīd as the most virtuous caliphs ! Right-guided caliphate is, in fact,

the championship of the Prophet's mental attitude and way of life. Then, what was the Prophet's frame of mind? It was to give credence to mute realities, the truths beyond the ken of human perception: the sincere-most disposition to obey God, willingness to forgo the present for the sake of future and adopting the means for that end: to give precendence to the after-life over the life of the world and to abstinence over affluence; and finally, to derive least benefit from worldly estate and effects and allow others to have the maximum advantage. These values depict the life of the Prophet which can be seen from the pages of his biography. Their practical demonstration is to be found in the battles of Badr and Trenches, in the journey to Tabūk, in the treaty of Hudaybia, in the conquest of Makkah, and in the 33 years of his frugal life after being commissioned to prophethood. Its initial stage is represented by his confinment in the Sh'eb Abi Tālib and the final one by the night when he died without even a earthen lamp in his house and his chain-mail having been already pawned for with a Jew 30 *Sa's* of barley.

Viewed from this angle the lives and the regimes of the first four Caliphs and the period of their rule would be found to be following the pattern of Prophet's frame of mind and life. Abu Bakr's extraordinary grit and firm resolve to fight the unruly Arabs who had abandoned Islam just after the death of the Prophet; his decision to despatch the troops under Usāma in order to fulfil his master's last wishes at the time when the city of Medina had to be defended against the idolatrous tribes of the Peninsula; his decision to wage war against the two most powerful empires of the day at that critical juncture are symbolic of his faith and obedience to God which cannot be seen elsewhere, save in the lives of the apostles of God and their successors blessed with vaulting ambition At the same time we find him leading a simple life, taking a stipend from the public treasury only as much as was essenttial to keep the body and soul together, denying even a sweet-dish to his wife and children and then asking to refund whatever amount he had drawn from the treasury by selling his private property after his death—all

these furnish a paradigm of perfect selflessness, a characteristic of the prophets of God.

In a similar way 'Umar's absolute faith in God in the decisive battles of Yarmūk and Qādesia fought against the Byzantine and the Iranian empires; his deposing of Khālid b. Walīd, the most successful and popular general, and appointment of the gentle and kind-hearted Abu 'Ubayda to take his place just before the battle of Yarmūk; his strictness with the governors and military commanders; his decision to allow vengenance to a poor Bedouin against Jabla b. al-Ayham, a chieftain and ruler of his tribe, show the same characteristic of Prophetic manner and conduct. 'Umar's refusal to take anything not available to the common man during the days of a severe famine and his insistence on it so obdurately that his death was apprehended in case the famine lasted for some time more, is enough to show his simple habits, austerity and frugality—the traits he had inherited from the Prophet and his predecessors.

Similarly the courageous defiance of 'Uthmān to the demands of the rebels and giving preference to die than resign under duress; absolute simplicity in his mode of living despite his affluence and riches; entertaining the guests of the state and others with sumptuous meals and himself taking only bread with olive oil constituted the robe of caliphate he had refused to abandon. These were also the distinguishing marks of the Prophet's cousin and the last right-guided Caliph. The battles of Jamal and Siffīn have beclouded the lustre of a shining trait which he possessed in the same degree as found in the life and regime of his first three predecessors. 'Ali's refusal to do anything that compromised with his principles and precepts to strengthen his rule; deposing of high officials not conforming to his high standard of piety and morality; the decisions taken by him to preserve the high standard of caliphate; his life of constant struggle without showing signs of fatigue, complete disregard for the praises of friends and criticism of the enemies; his sense of duty and humility, self-abnegation, honesty and love for truth demonstrate the perfection of his faith. Those betaking

the path of the Prophet's *sunnah* realise that 'Ali had to face an entirely different and a more difficult situation than his predecessors but his actions and policies were motivated by the same sense of duty and unflinching faith in God as his predecessors. Certain historians and scholars unable to fathom the nature of events and circumstances faced by 'Ali consider these as internal strife and rebellion but we consider 'Ali to be a victim of the obtaining state of affairs which he tried to tackle with the best of his intentions and ability. We believe that the Syrians made a discretionary mistake which need not be condemned by us, but 'Ali, on his part, took the action dictated by his honesty of purpose and love for justice and truth which raised him by stages in nearness to God.

His simple and frugal living reflected the self-abnegation of the Prophet, Abu Bakr and 'Umar. His life of severe self-discipline was so demanding that no hermit or self-denier of his time could follow his example and his own officials and relatives including his brother 'Aqīl b. Abi Tālib found it too rigorous to be endured by them.

The Prophet had, in truth and reality, inculcated such a perfect faith in God and the life to come in his companions that had re-shaped their behaviour and morals and life-style. It was this conviction which found an expression in their self-denial and frugality in all situations whether it was success or failure, poverty or affluence, misery or regency. The first four caliphs were the miraculous representatives of this very faith and conviction and they are known as right-guided for they inherited and kept up this classic quality of the Prophet to the pitch of perfection. But those who were ignorant of the nature of this prophetic patrimony took the caliphate to be succession of a monarch, of enjoying the benefits and inheritance of kingship by the relatives of a ruler. It was certainly a mistaken view since the caliphate meant performing the duties of the Prophet, of leading a life of austerity and self-abnegation, of taking the least and giving maximum possible benefits to the people, of undergoing greatest sacrifices for the welfare of others. There can be

no denying the fact that all the right-guided caliphs acquitted themselves of this onerous responsibility to the fullness of their ability. Prophethood is really the vicegerency of God and caliphate the vicarship of the Prophet. God's independence of all that exists is one of the significant divine attributes. God, as the Quran says, *feedeth and is never fed.* It is beyond the competence of man to attain that stage, but the acme of one's perfection lies in providing maximum benefit to others while denying oneself as much of it as is humanly possible. So far as the divine attribute *feedeth* is concerned, man ought to follow Him by being generous and courteous, and for *never fed* he ought to be self-denying and never being under an obligation of others.

All the phases and junctures that Islam will have to pass through have, in my opinion, been symbolised within the short period of 30 years during which the right-guided caliphate existed. It furnishes a model for all exigencies. How the faith in God should guide one's behaviour during the period of success can be found in the regime of Abu Bakr. What steadfastness and gratitude is required of a believer during the period of glory and grandeur is shown by the rule of 'Umar. Patience and endurance dictated by conviction in God during a period of strife and rebellion and lawlessness is revealed by the courage and sufferance of 'Uthmān and 'Ali. Had Islamic history to furnish only the precedent of first two Caliphs, which are in reality the continued exemplification of the same type of situation, the guidance provided by the right-guided caliphate would have remained incomplete without a specimen to show the Muslims the way during the period of stress and difficulty. The nation of Islam had to abide to the end of time and therefore it needed paradigms for all eventualities, all the vicissitudes of life that man has to undergo. It, therefore, required illustrations of both the types to guide its behaviour and morals and this need was fulfilled completely and in all its aspects by this dual phase of the right-guided caliphate in the initial period of Islamic history.

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